

In 2006, Mayor Roy Buol and the City Council identified sustainability as a Top Priority during their annual goal setting process. Included with in this was the goal of Social/Cultural vibrancy. Dubuque's Intercultural Competence Initiative (ICC) has been integral to this effort. In 2006, the city hired One Ummah Consulting to conduct an assessment of our efforts to create an inclusive organization. We recognize that thriving organizations are filled with diverse, productive employees and are operated under conditions that allow people to reach their potential. However, working successfully together across diverse background is not an inherent human behavior. It takes intentional effort to build the skills and confidence to interact effectively with people whose backgrounds are different than our own. The City of Dubuque's ICC Initiative focuses on learned, adaptive changes that allow us to reap the benefits of diversity while simultaneously maintaining a strong sense of community. The City of Dubuque employs 527 full-time and 129 part-time employees including: FT Females: Black/African American (1), White (128); PT Females: Black/African American (6), Hispanic (1); White (82); FT Males: Black/African American (2), Hispanic (3), American Indian/Alaskan (1), White (406); PT Males: Black/African American (1), Hispanic (1), White (58). These employees are responsible for serving an increasingly diverse public as our community demographics shift. According to US Census from 2000 to 2010 Dubuque experienced significant increases in minority residents including a 226% increase in the number of African-American residents, a 192% increase in Asians, a 79% increase in community members of 2 or more races, and a 45% increase in the Hispanic population. We continue to anticipate significant shifts in our demographics, as we witness a more national and international focus amongst some of our largest

employers (John Deere, IBM, Prudential, McKesson, Sedgwick). In addition, more than one million tourists visit Dubuque annually.

As a local government whose primary goal is to serve residents of all backgrounds, we recognize that it is critical for our workforce to develop the skills to interact effectively across cultural differences and reflect the community we serve. Our ICC Initiative provides guided development of intercultural skills for our employees. In 2006 One Ummah conducted an initial assessment of the intercultural skills of city employees, and to provide us with an Intercultural Sensitivity Report and Recommendations. We define diversity as any difference that might make a difference to productivity, safety, cost, legality, and serving the public. A baseline of our staff's intercultural skills was established using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a statistically reliable, cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The Report and Recommendations contained long term goals around developing staff skills and addressing systemic issues that are affecting our ability to attract, recruit, and retain employees reflecting the diversity of our community. We know we need people with the skills and resources to lead intercultural competence efforts. To that end, we created an Intercultural Team to direct the implementation of recommendations set forth in our report and created a strategic plan, specifically around training of existing and recruitment of new employees. In 2011 we evaluated the progress we have made towards the recommendations and strategic plan items over the past five years. The bulk of our progress over the past five years has occurred in training and recruitment. Our report indicated that on average it takes 8 – 10 years to make significant and

enduring systemic change. Much of the work completed by the City's Intercultural Team in the first five years was focused on creating an organizational framework to facilitate this transition and sustain its momentum.

Training - The 2006 Report recommended skill building with all staff and also noted employee concerns regarding the way in which conflict is dealt with, or not dealt with, and recommended education on Intercultural Conflict Styles. In 2009-10, all City staff received 3.5 hours of training on Intercultural Conflict Styles. The training discussed the implications of one style dominating the organization. The Intercultural Team now offers two, 3.5 hour foundational training sessions on an annual basis for all new employees who join the organization and has begun offering opportunities for open and authentic dialogue during conflict. The Intercultural Team wanted to evaluate the ways in which the climate of the organization is changing as a result of these efforts. To do so, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The quantitative data is gathered from the Intercultural Development Inventory. In 2011, 105 employees of the City's leadership team retook the IDI. The results of our efforts showed movement in cultural competence in our organization. The fact that we no longer see trailing issues in defense amongst the leadership team is a positive indicator of progress in our skill building efforts. We have also reviewed the group profile for the ICC team members as compared to the full leadership group profile, and found that this group has developed more skill, likely due to their ongoing focus on putting what they have learned in training into practice.

We also have qualitative data in the form of focus group interviews with groups of employees and groups of community members. During the spring of 2011, we held

separate focus group meetings with the following groups of employees and community members: 1) management employees; 2) non-management employees; 3) gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning/queer employees; 4) employees of color; 5) female employees; 6) male employees; 7) employees with disabilities; 8) employees over 40; 9) employees under 40. Finally, we solicited feedback at a management team meeting in an attempt to give a collective voice to the community and to employees.

The qualitative feedback confirmed that there are less defensive behaviors in the organization and fewer openly intolerant attitudes. The groups also confirmed that the intercultural initiative is now “top of mind” throughout the organization. There was some indication that more open conversations and reminders are occurring. Here is a quote from a firefighter after the training: *“Realizing there are multiple perspectives and that not everyone thinks like I do. My intentions are to treat people with respect and an openness to their cultural norms, but I realize now, I may have offended some without even being aware of it.”*

In response to employee requests for “culture-specific” training, the team has offered several one-hour mini-training sessions around issues related to poverty, disability, race, sexual orientation, national origin, and age. A committee of employees is also responsible for placing community-building tips in the bi-weekly employee newsletter designed to continue refreshing staff on key intercultural concepts and skills. The Intercultural Team also offers training tips approximately six times per year at leadership team meetings.

In an effort to sustain training without the hiring of an outside consultant, the city invested in training city staff as Train the Trainers. Since 2008, when the Intercultural

Team completed its 90 hours of train-the-trainer, the Team has offered 103 sessions of Intercultural Competence Foundations training to a combination of City employees, businesses, community groups, and non-profit organizations. The Team further provides two, 2.5 hour Foundations sessions for all Board and Commission members twice per year, and invites the general public to attend as well. In addition, the Team has entered into agreements with three non-profit organizations to provide in-depth training and development work for diversity and inclusion teams, and is negotiating an agreement with a private business. The Team also will be piloting courses with local business leaders as part of the Northeast Iowa Community College Business Consortium's continuing education program.

Hiring - The 2006 Report also identified the City's current hiring process as possibly hindering efforts to attract and recruit diverse employees. Of particular concern was that fact that the background checks are inconsistent and are not transparent enough to allow for consistency in process. In response, the City has put the background check/ Post-Offer of Employment Policy in writing and placed it on the City's website in order to improve transparency. The Report also recommended that the interview process include questions that explore individual prospects' experiences, interests and abilities that incline toward intercultural sensitivity. The Intercultural Team created a list of questions designed to get at these skills and has trained management team members on identifying the types of responses indicative of intercultural skills and experience.

By focusing on Intercultural Competency in the areas of training and hiring the city of Dubuque is building sustainability and resiliency within our organization.