

## Building a Cohesive, Diverse Team

Research shows that building a diverse work teams takes longer than a homogeneous team; however, innovation and productivity improve significantly over time. So, it is worth the effort and time spent on building the team. The question is how do you build the team?

Let's first consider the things you should do to get the team started out right. The following will get your team off to a good start.

- Before working with the team, take time to orient each team member on the organization, department, and job. Employees will start off better if they understand the environment in which they work.
- Before working with the team, determine what the vision, mission, and goals by which the work of team will be guided. These should be aligned with your departmental and organizational goals. Teams focus better when they have a common purpose.
- Determine the formal forum for building the team. Will you do this during regular staff meetings or schedule additional time? Who will facilitate the process?
- Use informal forums to build the team, e.g. regular staff meetings, lunch. Teambuilding shouldn't just be about tasks; it should also be about relationships.
- Before teambuilding meetings, make sure that any content covered in the meeting and the agenda is provided well in advance so that team members can read the material - this will make meeting time more productive.
- In order to build the team, you should cover the following topics during your meetings:

- 1) The purpose of the team,
- 2) Tasks assigned to the team,
- 3) Goals for the task at hand,
- 4) Clarify roles of team members,
- 5) Set mutual objectives,
- 6) Identify personality and diversity preferences of team members,
- 7) Discuss ways to work together and take advantage of strengths of each team Member,
- 8) Develop mutual expectations between team members,
- 9) Teach team members how to use basic team tools, such as consensus decision making and team problem solving.

For further reading:

- "Essentials for Leading a Diverse Workforce: Diversity Awareness" participant manual and toolkit