

# 2017 Inclusive Listening Tour – Results Summary

## Overview

From August to October 2017, the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce initiated an Inclusive Listening Tour, to start a dialogue among various groups in the Wichita community for one of the Chamber's 2017 focuses: diversity and inclusion.

The primary goals of the listening tour include the following:

- Understanding the needs and challenges of underserved populations in the Wichita region and learning about progress already being made to address those obstacles.
- Expanding individuals' professional networks to identify opportunities for collaboration on diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- Recognizing gaps relating to diversity and inclusion that may be addressed appropriately by the Chamber or Chamber members.

Listening tour sessions were hosted by the Chamber and Chamber members: Envision, the Boys and Girls Clubs of South Central Kansas, and Friends University.

The target audience for the listening tour included representatives from businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations in the Wichita region, who attended one session according to their types of organizations. The listening tour sessions were held for Artistic and Creative Communities, Business Entities, Disability-Serving Organizations, Faith Communities, Gender and Sexual Orientation Organizations, Government Services, Minority-Serving Business Organizations, Neighborhood and Community Groups, and Youth-Serving Organizations. In total, 486 businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations were invited to participate in the listening tour. Approximately 90 individuals attended, representing 70 of the 486 groups invited to participate in the Inclusive Listening Tour.

During the listening tour sessions, several themes surfaced. These themes include the following:

- **Broad definition of diversity**—The Wichita community must understand that diversity stretches beyond visible characteristics.
- **Ongoing work for future benefits**—Embracing diversity requires continuous intentionality and willingness to experience discomfort in order to understand and accept other people. This process takes time, but will reap great benefits for our whole community in the future.
- **Economic and social effects**—Diversity and inclusion affects Wichita's quality of life and economy. Businesses and private sector leadership benefit from diversity and inclusion initiatives as they hire and attract diverse talent to their companies.
- **Individual and organizational self-evaluations**—Businesses, the public sector, and nonprofit organizations need to continuously engage their employees and, more importantly, their leadership with diversity and inclusion training and regular evaluations and cultural self-assessments.
- **Training for underserved populations**—Underrepresented and underserved groups in the community have a need for mentorships and professional training (leadership, management, and business development).
- **Relationships and collaboration**—There is a need to establish and deepen relationships between underserved individuals and organizations in the Wichita community to share stories of diverse individuals; provide access to available resources; and create safe spaces to work, learn, play, and

simply be. Additionally, organizations and businesses need to connect and collaborate together in order to network and learn from one another, support each other's efforts, and employ diverse, talented, and trained individuals.

### Elaboration on Emergent Themes

At listening tour sessions, participants' comments were recorded anonymously. The following are examples of statements made by participants during the listening tour, categorized appropriately by theme:

#### **1. Broad definition of diversity**

- We're all diverse. Diversity means so many different things. It's even broader with dimensions of diversity or diversity of thought.
- Try to look at all diversity dimensions.
- Diversity not only ethnicity, but all dimensions, even the ones that are invisible.
- Different generations, and also diverse nationalities. Lots of diversity inside our diversity.
- Have strong push for thought diversity, encouraging everyone to feel comfortable to share ideas.
- Bring understanding that there are more than 5 diversity categories.
- In our office, we broaden terms besides race and gender. Adding equity when talking about inclusion.
- I think of the diversity iceberg, which helped me to clarify that diversity is huge and multilayered.
- Covers so many different areas than race and gender.
- It means including people of all economic backgrounds.
- We must consider diversity of opinion also—not just ethnic background—because then you can see things from different angles.
- Not just race and culture, but also age.
- We have to think of diverse physical and mental abilities.

#### **2. Ongoing work for future benefits**

- It's good to hear the perceptions of others, even if it is sometimes difficult to hear those perceptions.
- Diversity and inclusion is an ongoing conversation that should occur more often.
- Wichita's finally getting it together. It still will take time, but we need to be deliberate and strategic.
- Try to be reflective of community and reach out to all segments of society—including those not included or those marginalized by society and law enforcement. Diversity provides resolve and benefits in the workplace as well.
- Community means that you get out and do stuff, out of the JOB and out of the comfort zone.
- It can be uncomfortable on both sides interacting with business community. It's fear of the unknown. Nobody wants to be offended or be offensive. We need to be able to feel more secure and venture to uncomfortable zones, community-wide and with the business community.

- Now is the time in Wichita to feel uncomfortable in order to be comfortable in the near future.
- When we are willing to be vulnerable and exposed, such growth takes place.
- There's an element of pain that we have to be willing to face. Have to choose between two kinds of pains—one that's bearable or one that's unbearable and requires surgery, which ends in better health. If I challenge someone's deeply engrained thought, that experience might not be pretty and neat, but uncomfortable and challenging. Maybe bringing up that thought may help that person realize that they had it.
- There is some initial pain and resistance that must occur at the beginning. I love to please everyone, but it's truthfully that's not going to work.
- It might not feel like we're initially improving lives, but we need to take the long-term view: that initially these conversations are hard and maybe painful, but remembering that in the grand scheme of time, we're doing bite sized pieces that will improve life, even beyond our lifetimes.
- Fear has been unmentioned until now. There can be a bit of anxiety in the public square, but it takes personal courage to step into that, face biases, and embrace what is different. I've been woke up and that's what it takes—to be open to step in and experience fear there, but it takes being uncomfortable.
- May require pain or discomfort to make progress. There's risk involved and no guarantee, but we must be willing to take risks in order to get equality and sense of communing together. Together we stand, divided we fall.

### 3. Economic and social effects

- It's critical that a major business organization like the Chamber understands how to make and keep Wichita a great place to do business for an extremely broad range of individuals and businesses. If we don't, we risk losing important drivers of our economy and valuable talent.
- Have to have a diverse community to attract diverse talent.
- Young kids want more than just a job. They want quality of life.
- Talent needs to feel accepted. It takes allowing employees to be their authentic selves in their different identities in a professional manner.
- Diversity and inclusion is an economic driver. Women feel unable to advance in their careers in Wichita. With small businesses growing or small businesses starting, it has an immediate impact on the local economy.
- Millennials want diversity and cultural pockets in an accessible city, and many don't think that that is possible here. That is partially reality and partially perspective.
- A big barrier for all of Wichita includes transportation options. It really hurts people who are trying to find employment; there are limited options and it takes hours to get to where they need to go.
- People are working to simply pay for their rides to get to work. The transit system is not even open on Sundays. We had a guy working 3<sup>rd</sup> shift who has to pay for cab to get him to work. His paycheck goes to transportation.
- The able-bodied are benefited greatly by those with disabilities who have access to mobility and work.
- It makes an economic impact by employing those with disabilities. Doing so converts a tax taker to a tax payer, and that employee ends up spending a paycheck back to the economy.

- Often for-profit people don't see nonprofit as vital to the business economy, but nonprofits do provide benefits and jobs to people. We have a huge impact on the community.
- We have a great quality of life that can anchor people to this community with our health and wellness coalition, so that people can live, work, play, and pray in Wichita.
- Need to encourage our community to brag about quality of place, to get away from the "Doo-Dah" mentality.
- Get students out to the resources in community to get them staying in Wichita.
- The business community can hire someone and that impacts a whole family.

#### **4. Individual and organizational self-evaluations**

- There's unspoken bias in Wichita. How do we address this? Hard workers come to the community and get jobs, but the bias still happens.
- We all have biases and different perspectives, which can affect how you treat people. Management webinars can help understand those.
- The focus is to bring down the city's unemployment rate among the population with disabilities, and to break down the idea from those who hire that individuals with disabilities can't work.
- Need to do better job of educating people who make decisions.
- Job applicants often don't mention working with disability services because they won't be hired.
- We focus on educating educators and supporting students to impact change in their schools. We help educators understand where their biases come from and encourage them to challenge their biases, so that every person gets to come to the table and feel like themselves without leaving a part behind.
- As our company's leadership takes on diversity and inclusion, they have to look at the company to see how that is being implemented. But as leadership levels rise, we see women fall off. Make sure that there are women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other minorities in high ranking positions because that's where decisions are being made. And minorities are more apt to make sure that other minorities are being served in their companies.
- Our board is made up mostly of Trans and gender-fluid people. We work on networking with different companies and organizations, but we also work on education for Trans issue with companies, schools, and City Council; it's important to acknowledge that Wichita is already a diverse environment with those groups. Straight white men don't understand the importance of diversity and inclusion, so the challenge is getting them to hear other people's voices because they don't know other perspectives.
- Many businesses don't include sexual orientation and gender in discrimination policies. Sexual and gender minority individuals can get fired and not be told of why they were fired, but they can understand sometimes that it was because of their sexual orientation or gender.
- In education, the students are reflection of the world, but the educators do not reflect the diversity of the world—it's predominately white, female teachers. And that in itself creates challenges.
- Where I've been at is with a white majority, and that group typically says, in no uncertain terms, that they want to look less white. The challenge is inclusion and education so they know what diversity and inclusion looks like; it's not just skin color.
- Need make an effort to assess yourself. Assess where you are culturally as an organization. Have cultural humility. Once you know where you are, you can head in different areas.

- One piece that we're talking about with businesses, is the need for cultural competency, but that goes beyond the diversity workshop with its use of structural and language assessments in order to know how we are in prioritizing groups above other groups.
- Begins with continual self-examination.

## **5. Training for underserved populations**

- Diversity and inclusion is translated as serving all communities with the goal of providing access to resources, services, and capital to advance business concepts—with a little assistance—to move ideas forward.
- Education should be accessible to all—economically, financially, and in regard to physical accessibility. How can we ensure that all who desire education or advancement can access it? We need to know the needs of the city and equip the workforce to serve the needs of the future.
- Leadership and mentorship opportunities for the differently-abled and underserved. There's no way they will be there until they are included in those areas.
- For business development and training opportunities, webinars are low-cost or free. Can have panel discussions with business owners, sharing those real life business stories that are inspirational and can move others to go down a path. Using KLC and mentoring opportunities—an obvious need, but difficult to implement with people's hectic schedules—to aspire business owners.
- How do you see a small or minority business owner as not a mentee, but rather a future potential competitor?
- Lacking leadership in Hispanic community, but needing to develop it, especially as the Hispanic community is growing. Those individuals are not only working at big companies, but need to learn how to have a leadership role in those big companies and committees. Some bigger companies are not giving minorities time off to serve on committees or develop leadership skills to one day hold those leadership roles. People from underserved communities can be given access to resources, but there can be a lack of confidence, which can be developed with mentorships.
- For my organization, diversity and inclusion is the core of our mission: giving youth of all backgrounds access to information, especially entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can be used to elevate economic and social positions. Youth from early ages can use entrepreneurship to improve their lives.
- One big thing is that we give diverse individuals a hope that they can stay in Wichita and develop a career and life that they want here. Many diverse people don't feel that there are those opportunities, so we work on educating our clients by having them meet with successful individuals so our clients see that they can have access to opportunities. By getting mentors and sponsors so our clients learn how to open the door of opportunity.
- Many people from different backgrounds don't know what they don't know. When they do, they get access and are able to go from there.

## **6. Relationships and collaboration**

- Getting an understanding of the resources available avoids duplication of programs and focuses efforts on serving our entire community.

- Networking and hearing different stories allows for brainstorming for possible emulation.
- This listening tour helps me see programs that could be collaborative opportunities.
- Volunteering in schools tends to provide our youth a realistic perception of who the professionals are in our community, and that they are approachable.
- Wichita is siloed community. Get people out of their natural, comfortable divisions where we can support each other and be all together.
- Envision has employees that are highly, highly skilled, and we need to make sure that business people are prepared for differently-abled people to come into their workplaces. Not all companies are prepared to hire differently-abled people.
- Minority groups need to be consulted by policymakers for initiatives (like NoMar), and have necessary funding so it can be fully used.
- Including the majority allows lesser heard stories and perspectives to be heard and shared with the greater majority and public.
- Nonprofits want to go to businesses as a real partners; we're not just in it for funding.
- We know that prejudice comes from a place of not understanding, so we're working to network, gain community support, and educate so people can begin to understand LGBTQ+ issues.
- Most of the interaction with our partners or sponsors is through events. With male-dominated fields or businesses, it is difficult to get a toe in the door, and those businesses may question how our organization impacts them. In truth, they could be hiring one of our clients someday.
- Some parents didn't feel welcome coming to the schools because of their backgrounds. We're doing more interactive community events like haircuts and fire/police events to build relationships.
- Be visible at community events. That's better than not showing up.
- Look at being visible and easy to find, and being accessible to ideas and needs.
- Programs like LW make people know that city and community awareness by citizens happens, and relationships form between businesses, education, and law enforcement.
- Hispanic community is large in this city, as well as the Asian community. We had task force years ago in Hispanic community to make a museum more welcoming by translating signs, hiring staff from community (who go on to have successful careers), reaching out in community, and having a signature Hispanic event.
- Intention is not quite enough to open up hiring pool, but have to go out into community to hire. Doing lots of listening in those situations. Being intentional, present, and visible.

### Work Currently Being Done

Some businesses and groups who participated in the listening tour have already been addressing diversity and inclusion in their environments. Many of these efforts go beyond diversity training programs, working to encompass and engage whole companies and the general Wichita community. Listed below are specific examples of diversity and inclusion efforts currently in place from listening tour participants:

- In the last 25 years, we've watched the progression of USD 259 and WPD with LGBTQ+ issues and diversity. We have 2 LGBTQ+ liaison employees, a deaf liaison, and a Hispanic liaison. We're reaching out and trying to reach all segments of society, as we should. The LGBTQ+ community is thrilled that there is representative for their community; it forms relationships. Also, we work with Starbucks and other nationwide companies to make Safe Harbors, safe places

for LGBTQ+ individuals. They train employees about hate and bias crimes laws, and those businesses provide a safe place if someone is victim of hate crime or any crime.

- Jeff Hersh, Goddard Public Schools: Circle of Friends (COF) is mentoring program matching special education students (student with intellectual disabilities in our FAA classrooms) with general education peers. The mission of Circle of Friends is to build positive relationships and encourage a climate that promotes tolerance and acceptance of everyone's uniqueness through positive attitude, respectful interactions, dedication, and enthusiasm. Our hope is that students will develop lifelong friendships. We have Circle of Friends clubs at several schools throughout Goddard including Goddard High School, Eisenhower High School, Eisenhower Middle School, and Discovery. I can only speak to the application process for high school. During club fair each year any student who is interested in joining our club can fill out an application and come in for a group interview. If a student completes the interview process and is a student in good standing, we accept them as a mentor.

We hold several events throughout the year including bowling, visiting the zoo, community Christmas dance, etc. This allows mentors and buddies the chance to interact and get to know one another. In the past buddies have attended prom and school dances with their mentor. The ARC of Wichita supports COF program through a variety of activities and community events. COF clubs are in many school districts across the Wichita area.

- We are holding biweekly support groups for anyone to have a safe place to vent. Many times, these support groups are a person's last stop. Get people into companies and organizations where they know they are okay and safe, and are able to talk about what they need.
- Adrienne Foster, Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: Our board is very deliberately made up of all types of people—not only Hispanics, but also minorities and the majority.
- Claudia Yaujar-Amaro, AB&C Bilingual Resources: I have a weekly radio show to give resources that covers all kinds of topics and provides communication for inclusion. I do Mexican cultural events so we can also let others know the beauty of culture (not imposing) and have education on both sides.
- Jamela Peterson, SocialPreneur Lab: We've helped several youth organizations, such as St. Patrick Catholic School and the Boys & Girls Clubs, to give kids the resources needed to empower and transform their lives. We make an intentional effort to ensure that youth from minority backgrounds gain access and are included in early education related to business and entrepreneurship.
- When we first approach businesses (and vice versa), some businesses don't understand "transgender" on a deeper level. The first thing to do is to educate them so they understand what our organization is talking about in order for them to absorb it and implement policies to change in their environments with something as simple as gender neutral bathroom. What we do is educate businesses on policies and help them make changes that work to improve their general environment.
- Captain Guy Schroeder, Wichita State University Police Department: We're using the Diversity and Inclusion Office at WSU to learn, be trained, and attend events.
- We're working to kick down doors that are locked and made of steel. Important to those younger than them, that there's an adult doing something by being an example that there are other people making progress. We're trying to create change from state, organizational, and institutional levels to help younger people coming in.
- Dr. Amy Bragg Carey, Friends University: We have a new program, Latino Leaders, and therefore we use the language of "I need you in my life, and you need me, and we need to be in relationship with each other." This language change takes time and relationship. And that is why

we are pleased that we will have our Latino Leaders to lead, help, and guide us. Our desire is to reflect the diversity of our community.”

- We already serve the diverse community of the region's schools with one of the largest Young People's Concert programs in the nation. Our Youth Orchestra program is diverse and inclusive but lacking in statistical data at this time. Board diversity and inclusion has grown in the last few years to include ethnic and age diversity. Guest soloists have, on occasion, reflected community diversity.

### Actions Implemented After the Listening Tour

Following the listening tour sessions, the Chamber sent a survey to listening tour participants, to gather feedback on their experience, provide the opportunity to include any comments not mentioned during their session, and identify any possible action steps arising from listening tour discussions. Below are some action steps identified by listening tour participants:

- In time, it would be helpful to visit with some of the businesses in attendance to see if they have a need for improving cross-cultural and clear communication (understanding accented speech) in the workplace. Perhaps I can help make the workplace more unified, harmonious, and eliminate misunderstandings which would improve efficiency and collaboration between non-native English speakers and English speakers.
- Our organization may join the Chamber after this. Our Board is taking a look at that this month.
- I made a call to a funder to discuss the issue of assisting arts orgs with audience diversification.
- Programming at our organization is already very diverse as we present shows for all ages, cultures, and music styles, etc. We are still looking for more programming for the Hispanic community, and are interested in presenting programs entirely in Spanish.

### Diversity and Inclusion Tips for Wichita's Business Community

The following are simple tips that businesses in the Wichita region may implement, according to their company vision, desired work environment, and available resources:

- As becoming more inclusive as an organization and a community takes time, be comfortable practicing patience.
- Consider your company's end of the year funds, and if possible, provide financial support to a community nonprofit organization and/or an artistic organization.
- Partner and collaborate with a nonprofit organization that shares your company's vision for the Wichita community. When doing so, ask the organization of their needs and of how you can assist.
- Volunteer with your neighborhood association, child's school, or a local nonprofit in order to become informed about some of the community's needs and to get out of your personal comfort zone. Also, encourage employees to do the same, volunteering their time and resources.
- Hold company-wide service days to aid local nonprofit organizations. Identify the frequency of these service days (biannually, quarterly, monthly, etc.). Furthermore, serve on a nonprofit's board; be their partner and advocate.

- Encourage and participate in organizational cultural self-assessments regularly (determine the frequency of these self-assessments for your company). Track personal and employee responses to observe possible improvements. For resources, connect with Wichita State’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Urban League of Kansas, or the Wichita Transgender Community Network (WiTCoN).
- Add a secure and comfortable mother room for female employees returning from maternity leave.
- Add a gender neutral restroom for clients, employees, and guests.
- Begin a conversation with employees about your company’s social environment: If they do not feel comfortable being themselves at work, ask how they would start feeling comfortable.
- Hire job candidates based on their qualifications and abilities. If candidates possess different abilities, provide them with mobility resources. Provide professional development opportunities for your employees and inform them of these opportunities, in order to increase skill levels and equip employees for future leadership.
- If you your company is LGBTQ+-friendly (having gender neutral restrooms, eliminating gender and sexual orientation discriminatory policies, etc.), market yourself as a LGBTQ+-friendly organization. Contact WiTCoN for additional help and/or to add your company to their upcoming directory of LGBTQ+-friendly businesses.

### Chamber Next Steps for 2018

Considering feedback given during the Inclusive Listening Tour and 2017 Chamber diversity and inclusion tactics, the 2018 tactics for the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce include the following:

- Internal to Chamber Tactics
  - **NEW:** Hire a Diversity and Inclusion Manager to provide oversight of Wichita Connect, facilitate the CEO Roundtable on Diversity, and implement other current and future diversity and inclusion programs at the Chamber.
  - Nominate employee(s) to participate in the Advance Kansas program.
  - **NEW:** Create an internal, employee-run Diversity Council at the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce to generate and implement diversity and inclusion projects and trainings for the organization’s work environment.
- Programmatic Tactics
  - Wichita Connect
    - Complete the launch of Wichita Connect
    - Build out the program with additional offerings for Ambassadors and investor employees
  - CEO Roundtable on Diversity and Inclusion
    - Continue to partner with Advance Kansas on this program
    - Bring the original cohort together once more in Spring
    - Open the program for a new cohort in the Fall, with invitation support from Cohort 1 participants
    - Identify metrics that can help tell the story of the business case and measure Wichita’s progress related to diversity & inclusion
  - Summer Youth Employment program

- Continue to share information about the program with our members, encouraging them to participate
  - Hire at least one Summer Youth at the Chamber
- Minority-Serving Business Organizations
  - Continue to support other organizations by leveraging Chamber resources and staff expertise
- Chamber Events and Programs
  - Continue to offer Chamber members engaging programs and events with speakers and participants that offer diverse perspectives.