



Request for Letters of Interest

Session Facilitator Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Reading & Discussion Program

Response Due January 31, 2014
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On behalf of the Tompkins County Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee (WDIC), the Department of County Administration is pleased to invite interested parties to submit a Letter of Interest to participate as Session Facilitator for the 4-week spring session of the *Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Reading and Discussion (WR&D) Program*. This forthcoming session represents the first in a series planned over the next two (2) years designed to strengthen the diversity conversation among the County government workforce. Funding for the series has been provided by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County's (CFTC) Social Justice Fund.

(1) Background

In 2012, the Tompkins County Legislature approved, upon recommendation from the WDIC, a proposal to pilot a reading & discussion program. The first of its kind, the program would serve as one example of an organization-wide commitment to creating a diverse and fully inclusive workplace, and to improving understanding and acceptance of the reasons for diversity. During the spring of 2013, the Tompkins County Department of Administration, on behalf of the WDIC, conducted a pilot of the program using a model and facilitation guidelines established by the New York Council for the Humanities (NYCH). The NYCH model is well understood in higher education settings and has been advanced to local community venues, such as community centers, libraries, and places of worship. Recently, the model has made its way into the workplace, emerging as a form of professional development and an approach to enhancing employee relations. The 2013 pilot was a success, with all of the participants encouraging continuation. The County proceeded to seek additional support and on November 14, 2013 it received a grant award from CFTC that will permit the WR&D Program to continue for an additional two years.

The Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) is also a WR&D Program collaborator. With their help, an evaluation plan has been developed to assess the short-term and long-term impact of the Program.

Among the targeted outcomes are:

- Enriching the diversity conversation among County government staff.
- Increasing individual connections across County departments and staff levels.
- Enhancing cultural awareness among County government staff.
- Improving County employee effectiveness by facilitating the expansion of scope of thought required to appropriately serve a diverse community.

(2) Program Description

The WR&D Program is open to all County employees. A single session involves a group of no more than 15 participants, led by an experienced facilitator, exploring the theme of a common text through the lens of the humanities—that is, by relating the readings to historical trends and events, other works of literature, and cultural and ethical considerations. The Facilitator works closely with a WR&D Program coordination team to develop a syllabus, discussion focus, and timeline. A single Program offering is organized into four sessions that meet four consecutive weeks. The duration of a single session is one and one half hours, and is typically scheduled for 3:00 p.m.—4:30 p.m. so as not to conflict with core working hours.

(3) Facilitator Responsibilities

The key responsibility of the Facilitator is to lead the four-session Program, engaging everyone in the conversation and keeping the focus of the discussion on track. Additional Facilitator responsibilities are as follows:

Planning and Preparation:

- Participate in up to 2 planning meetings with the WR&D Program Coordination Group, or designee
- Participate in the review and selection of the Common Text and propose the WR&D syllabus.* (*In addition to literary examples to direct the discussion, the Facilitator may choose a brief segment of a video to illustrate an idea or historic event that exemplifies a specific point.)
- Develop brief bio and quotes to be included in WR&D outreach materials.
- Finalize Common Text readings for each of the four sessions.
- Prepare welcome message to be sent to all confirmed participants.

Delivery:

- Set “rules for engagement” for the group.
- Keep discussion focused and inclusive, encouraging full participation and providing a safe space for creative ideas.
- Adapt the process as necessary to help the group move forward (adhering to a 1.5-hour time frame).

Follow up:

- Participate in a debriefing with the WR&D Program Coordination Group, or designee.
- Provide written feedback on strengths of the WR&D Program and suggestions for improvement.

The Facilitator will receive an honorarium of \$600.00

(4) Qualifications

- Experience designing an effective and engaging discussion format.
- Significant skill and experience in moderating or facilitating groups, with particular emphasis on the group dynamics involved when discussing the valuing of diverse cultures and perspectives.
- Ability to handle difficult behaviors and adapt to changing situations as necessary.
- Completion of professional training or certifications that complement actual experience.
- Sufficient knowledge to adequately support the overarching goal of the WR&D Program.
- Experience working with local government entities a plus, but not required.
- Must be available during the period of March 10–May 9, 2014. (Note: This is the tentative date range for the spring session. Exact dates for the 4-week session will be set at a later time following discussion with the Facilitator.)

(5) Requirements for Letter of Interest Response

A complete response will include the following:

- a) Letter of Interest explaining the desire to serve as a WR&D Program Facilitator.
- b) Brief professional bio, with emphasis on qualifications outlined in Section 4 above.
- c) Three professional references.

Responses are limited to 4 pages. All information must be submitted electronically to the following email address: emurphy@tompkins-co.org

The Response Deadline for interested parties is January 31, 2014.