



Request for Letters of Interest

Session Facilitator Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Reading & Discussion Program

Responses Due Monday, August 1, 2016

The Department of County Administration is pleased to invite interested parties to submit a Letter of Interest to participate as Session Facilitator for a 4-week session of the *Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Reading and Discussion (WR&D) Program*. Designed to strengthen the diversity conversation in the County workplace, the WR&D Program seeks to enhance cultural awareness and improve employee engagement.

Background

In 2012, the Tompkins County Legislature approved a proposal to pilot a reading & discussion program for County staff. 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 conducted the program pilot using a model 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 financial support for the program, and on November 14, 2013 it received a grant award from the Community Foundation of Tompkins County (CFTC) that allowed the WR&D Program to continue for an additional two years. During the 2016 budget deliberations, the County Legislature approved permanent funding for the WR&D program.

The Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) is another WR&D Program collaborator. With their help, an evaluation plan was developed in 2014 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.

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 diversity and inclusion topics or issues that impact the workplace. The Facilitator works closely with a WR&D Program coordination group to develop a syllabus, which may include a combination of literature, poetry, news articles, video clips, etc., and relating these to historical trends and events or cultural and ethical considerations that influence the workplace environment and impact employee effectiveness. A single Program offering is organized into four sessions that meet 1 day a week for 4 consecutive weeks. The duration of a single session is one and

one half hours, and is typically scheduled in the late afternoon (ex. 3:00 p.m.—4:30 p.m.) so as not to conflict with core working hours.

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
- Develop a syllabus.
- Develop brief bio and quotes to be included in WR&D outreach materials.
- Finalize readings, video selections, etc., 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 up to \$600.00 when all work is completed.

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.

Submitting Letter of Interest Response

A complete response will include the following:

- a) Letter of Interest briefly explaining your understanding of the work and your desire to serve as a WR&D Program Facilitator.
- b) Brief professional bio, with emphasis on the required experience noted in the Qualifications section above.
- c) Three professional references.

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

The Response Deadline is Monday, August 1, 2016