DISABILITY, DIVERSITY, AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN CILS:

CREATING SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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>> CAROL: Good afternoon and welcome to our webinar, Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality in CILs: Creating Supportive Organizational Culture and Infrastructure. I'm Carol, instructional designer with ILRU. Today's presentation is brought to you by the IL‑NET for CILs and SILCs. It is operated among Independent Living Research Utilization, National Council on Independent Living, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living and Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities, with support provided by the Administration on Community Living at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This webinar is being recorded and will be available on demand within a few days. You can go to ILRU.org where you will find all the materials for the presentation, including the PowerPoint, audio, transcript, and any other supplemental materials that may be posted subsequent to this presentation.

Today you'll have an opportunity to ask questions during the webinar. If you move your cursor on the screen, you should be able to see a bar on the bottom of your screen and there in the middle one of the options is Q&A, and you can use that to type questions at any time. And we will address them during our Q&A breaks.

Captioning will also be available by opening the CC tab on the main screen of the webinar, or if you prefer, you can view the full screen captioning. You are welcome to log into the chat there and enter your questions and we will respond to them during our Q&A breaks as well.

You can find the URL in the chat on the main webinar screen. And one final bit of housekeeping, at the end of the webinar, an evaluation form will open in your web browser. Please do fill that out. It's short and it's easy to complete. We use them to improve the work we do in the future. We really would like to have your thoughts.

I would now like to introduce our moderator for today, Stanley Holbrook. Stanley is owner of S. A. Holbrook and Associates, management and consulting firm offering organizational development, diversity and inclusion training, strategic planning, and capacity building training. He was instrumental in developing the diversity initiative of the National Council on Independent Living. He served as the chair of the NCIL Diversity Committee and member‑at‑large of the NCIL board for 15 years.

Welcome, Stan.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Welcome, everybody. I'm excited to have you join us for this important session. As you see on the slide, you have the contact information for our presenter, Daisy Feidt, myself, and Reyma McDeid. I urge you sometime today to visit the ILRU, Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality CIL website at www.CIL‑diversity.org, the nine CIL case studies and other information gathered from this project that we'll probably be referencing today.

If we could move to Slide 4.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Diversity, Disability, and Intersectionality Project, ILRU, in collaboration with public research and evaluation services conducted a three‑phase research study entitled "Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality."

This is showing how they are improving services, racially, ethically and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

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Some of the definitions that we will use today, diversity are differences in culture, ethnic or racial classification, self‑identification, tribal or clan affiliation, nationality, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification or expression, socioeconomic status, education, religion, spirituality, physical and intellectual abilities, personal appearance and other factors that distinguish one group or an individual from another.

Intersectionality is the multiple social group memberships and identities that expose an individual to different types of discrimination and disadvantage.

Slide 6, please.

The sites selected for the case studies were Access Living, out of Chicago, Illinois. Center for independence of the disabled in New York. Central Coast Center for Independent Living in California. Center Iowa Center for Independent Living, Des Moines, Iowa, Reyma is here to present today. Community Resources for Independent living out of California. DisABILITY Link out of Atlanta. Illinois Independent Living Center. Independent First, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, St. Paul, Minnesota.

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What we'll learn today is the importance of organizational infrastructure as a necessary framework in achieving Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality. We'll learn some of the steps involved in developing and/or revising mission and vision statements, policies and procedures that reflect commitment to cultural competence, disability, and intersectionality.

We'll also learn of steps to engage the Board in supporting Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality.

And as you can read the rest of the slides, there are some further steps when it comes to development of staff and cultural change that are really important that we will touch upon today as we move through this session.

Right now I would like to ‑‑ next slide, please ‑‑ introduce our speakers. Our presenters are Reyma McDeid and Daisy Feidt. Reyma McDeid is the executive director of Central Iowa Center for Independent Living in Des Moines. She has carved out a unique career in employment services, disability advocacy and education. Reyma works to engage voters with disabilities into the political process and educate elected officials on the issues that impact Iowa's largest minority community. She holds a master's degree in nonprofit administration with a concentration in business. Reyma's vocation is supporting fellow individuals on the autism spectrum to lead independent, fulfilling lives. I would like to say a little about Daisy Feidt. Daisy Feidt is the executive vice president of Access Living, Chicago's Center for Independent Living. She has worked as Access Living for more than 15 years and held a variety of management positions during our tenure. At her tenure in Access Living, Daisy led the organization through multiple strategic planning processes and has gained extensive management experience in fundraising, evaluation, and program implementation.

Right now I'm going to turn it over to Daisy. Welcome, Daisy.

>> DAISY FEIDT: Thanks, Stan. I'm really happy to be here today and I just want to say that Access Living is pleased to be a part of this important project. I just wanted to start with some background about Access Living. We were established in 1980 and were the Center for Independent Living that serves the city of Chicago. We have about 60 staff right now and we reach about 1800 consumers, approximately, annually, and our budget is around 6 million.

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Okay, so I want to give context for why we started tackling issues around diversity and intersectionality, and we started to do so? An intentional way in 2008. It was quite a while ago. The infrastructure work that we've been doing is really very focused on race, and that's because we had two race‑related incidents at access. One was an email that got sent around that was a racist email that caused issues, understandably. The other one was a piece of artwork done by a disabled artist that we had put in the building that was depicting racism, but I think because of some issues that were bubbling under the surface, just that in itself caused some issues.

So both of these caused, I think, some issues that were bubbling on the surface to spill over in a big way, and we knew we had to tackle it head‑on.

So we developed a plan to take the organization through a process of learning and, you know, we hoped to grow. And I want to say that we in no way have this completely figured out. We are definitely still in process and working really hard to keep continuing to get better on these issues. But we'll be talking a little about what we've learned so far.

Next slide, please.

So, the process we began in 2008 was first of all to have an immediate staff discussion on the incidents that occurred with a facilitator, who could do a good job of taking the staff through a conversation about race, which was ... you know, it can be a really difficult topic.

We also did trainings for staff on the intersection of race and disability, which were really important. We had a consultant come in and talk to our management team about things that we could take and actions we could take to help move the organization in a good direction. Another important part of the process, probably the most important part is we set up a staff‑led racial justice council that included all levels of staff from all departments to discuss issues and create an action plan for improved cultural competency around race. And this was particularly important because we had a lot of people of color at the time who worked at Access Living but very, very few on the leadership team or management staff. So having a racial justice council that was made up of all different departments and levels of staff to have a Nothing About Us Without Us approach, which is important in independent living, was critical.

We had a staff retreat and tackled three main topics, and one was specifically around what racial justice looks like in the context of Access Living.

Now I'm going to turn it over to Reyma.

>> REYMA McDEID: Thank you, Daisy, and thanks, everybody, for joining us this afternoon for this awesome conversation. CICIL just continues to be honored to be able to be a part of this project. We have come a really long way in a short period of time. Three years ago we almost closed our doors, and today we are fully functioning Center for Independent Living right smack dab in the middle of Iowa, and we are doing a lot of really awesome things. And one of the things we're doing definitely ties into the topic of conversation today, which is disability and intersectionality.

But before I get into that, a few stats about CICIL. It's great to be able to do this presentation in tandem with Daisy, because I think Access Living is, as far as size and operating budget, are concerned, the polar opposite of us at CICIL, we're tiny in comparison. We were founded in 1990, same year that the ADA came into being. We are a staff of five. And our annual budget is around $250,000 a year. So, again, kind of the polar opposite of what Access Living is working with.

But said, we work with a pretty large portion of the state of Iowa. We serve Des Moines, which is right in the middle. And then the county that Des Moines is in, which is Polk County, and then the counties that surround Polk County. And so geographically speaking, it's a pretty large portion of the state. And Des Moines is home to some of the most diverse racial and other demographics in the state of Iowa, so that means that the folks that are coming through our doors, and the folks who have come through our doors since CICIL has come into being are very diverse. However, in contrast, the staff and the Board for CICIL has been 100% white until I was hired, literally. So, we can go to Slide 12, please.

And so that disparity has been a point of consideration for CICIL since its inception to the point of where in 2008 the RSA recommended that CICIL set up an infrastructure that would allow for more cultural competence around the client base that we work with. And the reality that CICIL's leadership and Board at that time experienced was, I think, a concerted desire to want to diversify and become more culturally competent, but there is simply a lack of understanding as far as how to make that happen. And so in 2014, RSA actually reiterated those recommendations that it had made to CICIL, and 2014 was also the year that CICIL began to experience a significant amount of transition, beginning in 2015 when the original executive director for CICIL retired, and myself was hired to replace that individual. As that was happening, there was also a conversation happening around whether or not CICIL should close or restructure, because, again, even with the retirement of the executive director, the original board still remained and still was grappling with how to best meet the needs of the folks that CICIL is meant to serve in a culturally competent manner. And so that question was looming on the horizon at the same time I was recruited, and I came on board with the commitment to fulfill the recommendations that the RSA had put forth around enhancing their cultural competence and around creating a more intersectional Center for Independent Living. So when I came on board, it was at the same time that a lot of other transitions were happening, which created the space for us to bring on individuals who would come to the organization with an understanding of what cultural competence should be and what it should look like at an organization like CICIL.

And then at the same time there was transition happening at the staff level, which, again, created that opportunity for us to bring on board individuals who really have a solid understanding of what excellent services look like for a diverse body of people.

Slide 13, please.

So basically what you hear me talking about is we were presented with a clean slate, and so it's a very interesting place for an organization to be, especially if the organization is over 25 years old. We were basically starting over. And so that gave us the space to reboot CICIL, so to speak, with a new focus, and an intention to create an intersectional organization. Now, I do want to mention that I think that there's an art and a science to enhancing the intersectionality of an organization. And obviously if you've got someone in leadership in the executive director level who is an intersectional person, who is a member of a racial or ethnic minority, this work is a lot simpler to do than if you are a person that is not a member of any other minority group than the disability community. Even though we were dealing with a lot of challenges at the same time, I feel to a certain extent that I was able to grapple with the focus of intersectionality in a manner that I think was less daunting than it might be for someone who had stepped into my role who was a causation, for instance. So, fast forward to this year and we were awarded the organization of the year award from the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission, and we were presented with that award because we have become known as an organization that is ‑‑ that provides excellent services to disabled people, to people with disabilities, but also has a lot of cultural competence with regards to diversifying elements, such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation. And we've actually become known as an organization that our sister providers can turn to when they are providing services to a client with a disability who is also diverse in another capacity, especially our sister providers that have individuals on their caseloads that are a different race than they are. So Slide 14, please.

So one of the things we tackled during the restructuring is a revisiting of our mission statement. So our original mission was to empower people with disabilities to lead barrier‑free lives. That sounds wonderful, obviously. But we felt that it was time to update that mission because the leading of barrier‑free live is not necessarily a mission that is rooted in reality. I don't know anybody that leads a barrier‑free life, whether or not they have a disability.

So, taking that into consideration led to us updating our mission, and it is currently to empower people with disabilities to be accountable in controlling their own lives.

And so subtle change, but somewhat profound as far as how it's rolled out in what we do on a daily basis at CICIL.

And so then the mission was revised to reflect the fact that nobody leads a barrier‑free life. And then the statement also reflects feedback from our clientele, many of whom experienced layers of diversity and feel that the more layers that they experience, the less likely society and the people in their lives are going to recognize their autonomy and their status as an independent individual in society.

Slide 15, please.

Prior to 2015, believe it or not, we lacked an articulated vision statement. So that was during our restructuring, we had the opportunity to craft a vision statement. And it is a community that is inclusive of people with disabilities at every level, including leadership. And the unwritten portion of that is "especially in leadership." Our vision statement was pulled together as a result of a lot of feedback from clients, but also from board members and from those of us on staff because we all experience disability. Regarding our own experiences and navigating services in Polk County, in Des Moines, and really feeling tokenized, especially when we step out of the role of being that person that is receiving supports and step into the role ‑‑ roles like peer or supervisor or leader, etc., etc.

So taking all of that into consideration is what inspired our current vision statement.

In addition to the opportunity to craft a vision statement, we were also presented with the opportunity to create CICIL's first policies and procedures. And so between the years 1990 and 2015, there had been times CICIL had attempted to craft policies and procedures, but none had been implemented, so that was something that we did during the periods of 2015 and today. And since we were able to have a clean slate as far as our policies and procedures were concerned, we were able to infuse them with cultural competence. And so in addition to our policies and procedures, our Board's operational bylaws had not been revised since 2008, so those were a document that we also revisited during this time. And I actually recruited an HR executive, who is a subject matter expert in the drafting of policies and procedures to join our board of directors, and in addition to experiencing a disability, she is also a member of a few other minority groups, and so came into the role of board member with a very organic understanding of the importance of cultural competency and intersectionality and in crafting the infrastructure for an organization.

So I want to stop for a second and reiterate something I mentioned, which is this ...

It's much more simple to create an intersectional organization when you've got people in leadership positions who are intersectional themselves. It's not impossible to do this when you're not working with ‑‑ when you're working with a non‑intersectional leadership team. But, again, when you've got folks in these roles that have that organic understanding of the importance of intersectionality, it shows in how an organization is run from an administrative capacity. And when you've got folks that are thinking about intersectionality 24/7 as opposed to folks who are thinking about outreach when they are sitting in board meetings. And so an important point to consider.

Back to the slide.

So our personnel policies were drafted to include components that all personnel policies should certainly have with regards to anti‑harassment, EEOC terminology and nondiscrimination. But our client policies were also drafted to include, in addition to verbiage around creating a nondiscriminatory space, policies around capturing LGBTQ+ data when doing intakes with clients. Obviously that's on a voluntary basis. It's not compulsory. And then in addition to creating a policy around commitment to meeting the peer support needs of our clienteles and our diverse service population when at all possible by matching our clients up with a staffer who experiences diversity in a similar manner as they do.

So next slide, please.

And then board bylaws were drafted to include a provision of a commitment to ensure a diverse board. I felt that was very important and board members also agreed with me. Given the fact this was a board that for 25+ years had been 100% white. So we wanted to get that in writing. So even when we all moved on from CICIL, we still have it in writing that there's that commitment to ensuring a diverse board above and beyond the federal mandate regarding disability representation.

Then in addition we also created a board application code of conduct, nondisclosure form, conflict of interest statement, and goals and expectations, to help prospective board members have a really clear understanding of what we're about, what the expectations are, and what our goals are, to really streamline that whole recruitment and selection process and ensure that once a person joined our board, they had a clear understanding of what they were getting into, so to speak, and wouldn't be met with any surprises along the way.

So next slide, please.

Going back to CICIL staff, we've all been certified to provide customized employment, support to job seeking clients. Prior to my coming to CICIL, supports around employment was number‑one request for support that CICIL experienced. However, CICIL wasn't able to meet that need. And so I heard that feedback loud and clear and everybody that is at CICIL has a high degree of competence around employment supports, but in addition to that competence, we have cultural competence as well. And so we've been become known as an agency to refer individuals who have disability and are seeking employment. Customized employment, if you know anything about it, it is exactly what it sounds like. It's about providing supports to a person that are individualized to their needs. As it currently stands, there's really no specific guidance, however, with regards to customizing supports to job seekers in a culturally competent manner. And so we have kind of carved a niche out for ourselves at CICIL, as far as customizing employment supports to the point that is also inclusive of cultural competence.

So next slide. I believe that my portion is over and I'm going to hand it back to Daisy.

>> DAISY FEIDT: All right, thanks a lot, Reyma. I just want to echo, first, before I get to the slide, when she and I were talking, it was good talking about the different perspectives we had on the work and how hard it is and all that stuff, given that I am white and Reyma is a person of color, I think that, you know, it's really valuable to look at those different perspectives, and I just appreciated hearing from her on that.

In terms of the mission and vision and policies and procedures, we have a lot less that we have done in this area than Reyma has done at her CIL, so I'm going to mention a couple of things. Access Living's mission statement has stayed the same for 20 years and really doesn't reference intersectionality. So, you know, that is just something we've worked ‑‑ something we have not worked on that much. We did revise our value statements. We did that in strategic planning in 2009 to include diversity and inclusion. I think that was an important step.

Next slide, please.

And in terms of policies and procedures, we have done some on this. Again, I think Reyma had kind of done a much deeper dive related to policies and procedures, but just wanted to mention, we have had a nondiscrimination policy since the '90s. Obviously that's pretty basic. The staff‑led racial justice council that I mentioned looked at human resource policies through a racial justice lens. And we did make several changes to our policies related to that, so I would definitely recommend that as a ‑‑ you know, an action step that is an important thing that I think we did. I just wanted to highlight one of the most significant changes that we made when we did that was to our wage and salary determinations. Now our wage and salary determinations, because of input directly from that group placed much more emphasis on people's experience coming into the organization, and we also made it much less ... we made it so that candidates are not able to negotiate salary as much as they were before, and that was based on feedback from the racial justice council and research that we were aware of that white people tend to negotiate salaries more, and therefore have higher salaries at organizations and companies. And so eliminating a lot of room for negotiation has just helped us be secure in the fact that we're you know, being equitable in terms of salaries across different staff.

And I think that is it for my slides, and we're going to go to questions and discussion.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you very much, Daisy and Reyma. Thank you for that rich discussion. Right now we're at our first Q&A. If you have a question, please submit it in the Q&A box on the main webinar screen, and we'll take some questions right now. If anybody has any questions before we move on.

I've received one question. I think I can answer it. How long is the DVI project? Well, it's been ... I mean, actually from inception it's been going on a couple years. When it came to ‑‑ we didn't really discuss all the forms and things that went on at the SILC conference and the other preparation that went on for months when it came to recommendations for centers that were really doing some amazing things in working within the realm of diversity, disability and intersectionality. So that has really been going on ‑‑ it's still going on right now. Because right now we're trying to get this information to you so you guys can actually actualize some of these things for your center

Any other questions?

It appears there no more questions. I will ‑‑ I would like to ask you one, Reyma, though. This process, how long did it take? You guys had a lot of stuff to do with a few people and the staff, and I'm interested. It's a tremendous amount of work. How long did it take to get this together? And I'm sure there had to be some kinds of things worked out, compromise or something, to get this where it is now.

Can you just give us a little bit.

If we can unmute her.

>> REYMA McDEID: Thank you for unmuting me. And thank you for asking that question.

You know, like I mentioned, it's ... I've been at CICIL for three years now and my first day, I ‑‑ it was apparent to me that this was the top priority for this organization. If this organization was going to have long‑term sustainability in Central Iowa and available to provide services in a meaningful capacity, this needed to be the absolute top priority. And it's because of this. So funding in Iowa is such that we've got pretty large segments of populations that experience disability but are not eligible for services anywhere else. Either they're not eligible for Medicaid waivers or the Medicaid waivers that they are eligible for do not adequately cover the services that they would benefit from. And so we've got folks that fall through the cracks, especially in Metro Des Moines. And if you go to our main homeless shelter in Des Moines, it is full of people who experience disability and would greatly benefit from services. And I would argue that because they're not eligible for services in a traditional sense, homelessness has become a reality for them.

And so CICIL has carved out a niche for ourselves as far as being a resource for people who aren't eligible for services anywhere else. That very much includes disabled people, or people with disabilities who are racial minorities, who are African American, who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially younger people who are members of the LGBTQ+ community who have disabilities. But in order to be able to meet those needs and any appreciable capacity, there was a lot of work that CICIL needed to do as far as setting our infrastructure. And if you walk into an organization that does not have policies and procedures, that's going to be an organization that is not really going to be able to provide services to anybody, let alone people who experience layers of diversity. And so that was an imperative for me. I've been fortunate enough that I have recruited people to the board and on to the staff who appreciate that imperative and have joined me with that and I do think that, you know, in three years we've done a lot of work as far as being recognized as a go‑to place for folks who are not eligible for services elsewhere.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you very much. I got another question in for either Daisy or Reyma, and I think it was Daisy. The question is: I'm curious. What did it take to create your racial justice council, and what information is available if this is something we wanted to explore?

>> DAISY FEIDT: So for us the racial justice council that I was referring to was staff. And I think, depending on the organization, it would depend on what you ... you know, who would make up that racial justice council. For us we had people of color on staff, so that made sense for us. If you were mostly white center right now, you are probably going to have to go outside your actual center to create it. But for us, since it was staff‑led, we just asked people who, you know, were interested. We made sure it went across all different departments, including our fundraising department, admin department. And then it was led by a person of color. I was the person who kind of coordinated it and made sure things were moving forward and did a lot of the logistical support for it, and, you know, I will be honest with the fact that it was, I think, somewhat of a ‑‑ we were unsure about how it was going to go and worried about maybe not being able to fulfill some of the things that the council wanted to come up with, but I'm glad we did it. It was an important process, and that Council pointed out things, especially since we were, you know, a very white leadership and continue to need to build our diversity in our leadership, it was really, really critical for us. And if people want more information about it, you know, they could reach out to me directly via email and I can say more about what we did and what the action steps were and things like that.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you. We have two more questions. One will be addressed openly, because it's a question about boards. This last question before we move on is: How do we know if every consumer necessarily wants to work with a staff person over other staff persons, who is diverse or intersectional in the same way the consumer is?

That's the question.

>> REYMA McDEID: I can chime in, if that's okay.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: That's fine.

>> REYMA McDEID: Okay. Well, at CICIL, we know what we know about clients because, well, we ask them. Or they tell us specially. I came to CICIL in 2015 and we undertook the SPIL in early 2016, so part of that was capturing feedback from our clients, and one of the top things that we heard from clients in addition to wanting to engage in employment support at a Center for Independent Living was wanting to work with a staffer that they could relate to. And a staff member that is a racial minority, if they ... if they're a person that is a racial minority and have felt like they have experienced a bit of a wall, so to speak, in the past in working with staffers who are Caucasian, they might feel that working with someone that is more racially diverse might help to bridge that gap so to speak. And so to answer that question, we know that clients want to work with diverse people because clients tell us that. And we hear that and we're doing our best to meet that desire and that need.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you. Do you have anything to add, Daisy?

>> DAISY FEIDT: No, I think Reyma answered that one very well. Thanks.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you.

At this point we're going to move on. If there's any other questions, we have another Q&A coming on.

Daisy, I would like you to give us some insight on engaging the right board and staff.

>> DAISY FEIDT: Sure. So, one of the things I wanted to start off talking about is just how helpful I feel like a strategic planning process can be, even if you're ‑‑ at your organization you haven't engaged in strategic planning before. Just think, it can be a really great tool for getting everybody on the same page and being able to really focus on diversity and intersectionality or diversity and inclusion. I say here it can be an important first step in engaging the board and staff. Not necessarily the first step, but an important step. I think it gives key people in the organization permission to focus on diversity and intersectionality and accountability measures, because strategic planning often involves doing a consumer survey of needs, then you can get the ‑‑ you know, get needs around intersectionality that way.

So it just can be really important. And for us it has helped change the dynamic from something people in the organization ‑‑ in our organization think of as important, but as somewhat tangential to something that really has become, I feel, much more part and parcel of the work we're doing. And it also can create an opportunity to refresh values, vision and mission, since that's often done in the context of strategic planning.

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So, I just want to give some examples of things that, you know, angles that could come out of strategic planning related to intersectionality. You could have goals around increasing board diversity to match your service area, which is something we did. You could have things around increasing outreach to an underserved community, creating partnerships with organizations who serve specific underserved constituencies, and also things that are more internal focused, such as becoming a model employer to attract a diverse workforce.

Slide 24, please.

So, in Access Living's particular case, our strategic plans in the past several years, really since 2009, so many years, have resulted in some very specific things coming out related to intersectionality. So one is we have a program that is for people that are Latinx with disabilities that is currently focused on immigration issues.

We have a community organizer who is specifically focused right now around racial justice issues. And then we also just have a much more racially diverse board. And I think all of these things are direct kind of outgrowth of things that were in our strategic plan.

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So, moving off of strategic planning a lit bit then, I just want to talk about ways that Access Living has engaged our staff in these issues. You know, I mentioned before, I think it's really important to train staff on the intersections of disability and race. I think because a lot of us come from a kind of social justice backgrounds and obviously if we're doing this work care a lot about disability. It sort of is taken for granted that we care about race. And I think we do, but there's a lot that I know, at least in our case, there's a lot that the white staff in particular needed to learn. You know, people, I don't think, have a full understanding of structural racism and the impacts that that had had on, like, every facet of society, and it's really important to ground staff in some of those concepts and that history.

I think it's really important to look at changing your recruitment practices, especially if you're trying to recruit more racially diverse or staff or mother identities as well. In our case we looked to local companies. We actually got some pro bono support from McDonald's, who have diversity inclusion professionals who work on this and they basically shared with us what their recruitment practices were and we took what was relevant for us.

So I think that can be really helpful.

Changing onboarding. The onboarding process, so, you know, the employee orientation, to reflect the importance and set the tone from the beginning that intersectionality is a big focus, that diversity is really important to the organization. I think it's just important to set that tone from the beginning. We've started asking questions in interviews with prospective staff that kind of cue them into the fact that intersectionality is really important to us and help us make sure that the fit is right in terms of that issue.

And really importantly, you know, I think ‑‑ again, our focus has been in terms of infrastructure around race. So responding to race‑related events that are occurring in the world and understanding that those things are having an impact on your clients who are racially diverse or ‑‑ and your staff is really important. So when the Charlottesville white supremist rally happened, we put out a statement condemning it. I think in the past we might have said, oh, that's not necessarily a disability related issue. And now this work is part and parcel to everything we do and absolutely is relevant and there wasn't any question that we were going to put out a statement about it. Or when the Michael Brown murder happened, you know, having ‑‑ gathering staff to talk about how they were processing it and dealing with it. I think those kinds of opportunities are incredibly, incredibly important.

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Also considering ‑‑ we talked about this already ‑‑ creating an internal committee to address issues. Especially if you people of color as non‑managers. I think this is really important. And just creating actionable goals with accountability mechanism and making sure this is a priority for key people in the organization. Just because I like to be specific, I put a couple of sample goals. You know, you could have things around increasing the racial diversity of the staff to reflect the demographics of wherever your CIL location is, if you're a CIL. And also an idea of conducting town halls on the intersection of disability and race.

Next slide, please.

Okay. So somebody asked about engaging the board, and I have a few ideas. I think Reyma already talked about a few ideas that I really liked, but one of the action items, the staff‑led racial justice council set was to increase racial diversity of our board. They set out from the get‑go that was problematic, at the time we had a mostly white board. This is back at a strategic plan goal. We set targets to match the makeup of the city of Chicago. We attended trainings with key board members on how to increase the board diversity.

The nominating committee chair at the time developed a nomination guidelines that made clear our intention to focus on increasing the diversity of our board, and those guidelines were then approved by the full board. So that was a way to get everybody on the same page of, this is going to be an intentional focus of ours, and we need everybody to work towards this goal.

I want to just mention that I love Reyma's idea of actually including it in the bylaws. I think that is a really important thing you can do as well.

Next slide, please.

I just want to mention strategies that for us I think were really important to being successful. Again, noting this is a work in progress, so I in no way want to give people the idea that we have everything figured out. But I think it was absolutely critical that we set targets for increasing the racial diversity of our board. We got a lot of pushback on this and had to fight to have ‑‑ to actually keep the targets. But it was really important. You need a goal that you're working towards or I think it's going to be very hard to get there.

You need to ensure that the board is trained and understands the importance of this and actually how to do some of the building the diversity of the board, again, going back to if you have white leadership, this is going to be a harder cast than it was for Reyma.

So, you know, we need to think about that.

Using available resources. I know this might depend on how big the area is that your organization is in, but some areas actually have services directly to address needs of building the diversity of the board. So look into what resources might be available in your area.

Consider hiring consultants. Again, there are some consultants that focus specifically on this issue and it might be that kind of thing you need outside help to do this.

Create a unifying vision statement. I think that's really critical in getting people all on the same page, again, helping them understand the importance.

And I think if needed, an effective strategy can be, if you think that there's going to be resistance from some board members, getting a couple of board members engaged kind of early and on board with the idea and asking for their support to help get the entire board to understand the importance and get on board.

Next slide, please.

So, some lessons learned for us. You know, you can't lose focus on the goal, even when the goal is reached. I remember a point in this process where about 40% of our board were people of color, which is what we wanted as a floor, and we thought we could sort of take our eye off the ball for a little bit. And by almost the very next year we were down in those statistics again. So it's just got to be something that is a constant focus, or at least for us that has been the case.

Constant networking is required throughout the whole year to make sure that you're getting, you know, opportunities to recruit board members who are diverse. And, you know, this is something that gets easier once you have a critical mass of folks that are actually on the board. Because then they can help you recruit other people.

And I think while you're recruiting, it's important to be explicit about what you're looking for and why. So if you're looking for folks who are racially diverse, you need to be explicit about that. We don't want people to think ‑‑ and it's definitely not the case ‑‑ that the only reason we want them on our board is because of their race, but you're not going to get the people you want if you're not explicit about some of the reasons.

Next slide, please.

And then just in terms of achieving organizational culture change, I have thoughts on that on this slide. It's important if you're mostly white on your staff or leadership or board, but change in the leadership and the staff and board itself is going to create that culture change, so that's kind of number‑one importance in my mind.

The leadership must model the shift in mindset of the organization, and this is a constant thing. This isn't something that, you know, you bring up the importance of intersectionality at, like, the annual meeting once a year. It's got to be brought up a lot in an ongoing way at staff meetings, board meetings, other, you know, fundraising opportunities, like everything that you're doing, think about, is there a way ‑‑ or should you be bringing up intersectionality? And I think it's got to be constantly on people's mind.

One thing I definitely want to mention is it's important, I think, to expect resistance and have a plan to address. This was definitely the case for us, and it did take me a little bit off guard. I think race is a hard thing for people to get their arms around, and for us the resistance took the form of people feeling I think mostly like, well, we already have this covered and, why are we focusing on this versus other things?

So just expect that this is going to be an issue and, you know, talk to some key people in the organization who you trust on these issues or who are really knowledgeable on issues or on race to figure out a plan to address it. Or this is an area where a consultant can be really helpful as well, because they would have dealt with this with other organizations and can help you figure it out.

For us it's been important to intentionally hire people who will keep the organization accountable. This, you know, is ‑‑ we've had people within Access Living who have just been incredibly key in this area. They have not been easy on us and that's what we needed, and they've been pushing. And without them we wouldn't have made as many gains as we have. So I think that's important.

Again, you have to have the mindset that intersectional issues are disability issues. We used to think if something was primarily a race issue that didn't fall in our bailiwick, and we really don't think of it that way anymore, and I think that's been one of the important changes, and I really recommend if you want to achieve organizational culture change in this area that you look at it the same way as well.

And you have to be open to doing the work. I think a lot of people will likely be surprised at how much work there is to do.

I say here I know we were ‑‑ I think I should qualify that I think the white people in the organization, including me, were surprised. I imagine the people of color were not. But you know, it's just important to keep in mind it's going to take a lot of work and it's ‑‑ you know, it deserves to be a priority and you need to put in the time and work to make it happen.

I'm going to turn it over to Reyma now.

>> REYMA McDEID: All right, thank you, Daisy. I've got just the one slide here, but there's a lot to unpack in this one slide. But before I even get into that, I want to touch on two important points of consideration that Daisy brought up. Expect resistance with regards to engaging the board. It's human nature. I think, you know, 99% of us love progress, but about 110% of us hate change. And so it's just ‑‑ it's an inevitability any time there's intentional shifting of a paradigm in an organization, especially when the paradigm shift involves something as sensitive as diversity. And so obviously people invest their time in the board of an organization, they care about the organization. We certainly cannot interpret their pushback or their resistance as a sign that they don't care or that they don't have the best interests of the organization at heart. And so it behooves us to invest a lot of time in supporting a board to make the transition, especially if you're working with long‑term board members who have seen the evolution of the organization for a long period of time.

And certainly that is something that I experienced at CICIL because we did experience a 100% board transition during my first two years at CICIL. And so I have mentioned several times that CICIL's board was 100% white until roughly 2015. But in addition to that, the board was also predominated by men. And so men who were baby boomer generation age. And so when I was hired and assumed the role of the executive director, I found myself in a position where I was literally half the age of the majority of the board, a woman, and African American, and various other diversifying elements. And so all of the challenges that a young person in leadership experiences, all the challenges that a woman experiences in leadership, I was experiencing all of that with ‑‑ when engaging with the board.

And so as I made it clear to the board that we were going to take very seriously the RSA recommendations as they had articulated in 2008, and again in 2014, that was met with the departure of several board members. And obviously transition happens, and it's fine when people move on to different avenues that allow them to use skill sets in ways that resonate with them and however they would like for that to look like.

And so that transition was met with in a very respectful, honored manner here at CICIL with thanking people for their time and wishing them the best as they moved on.

As the transition of board members came off the board, we had the transition of board members on to the board. And we are a tiny organization, which I have mentioned. And so our board is tiny as well. We are a board of seven. But our board is incredibly diverse. It's probably one of the most diverse boards in Iowa. Within this board of seven we have African American representation. We have Asian American representation. We have representation from the Latinx community. We have representation from the LGBTQ+ community. And we also are meeting and exceeding the federal mandate with regards to proportion of individuals on the board who experience a disability.

We even have a person on the board who does not experience disability but is the parent of someone who experiences a disability. That recruitment was made as a result of feedback that we had received with regards to that being a gap for CICIL. There not being any representation around parents of people with disabilities.

And so very diverse board. Kind of a total 180 of the board as it stood as recently as 2015.

And so how did that happen, though? And this I will touch on another important point that Daisy brought up, and that's the importance of networking. Always networking with regards to the board. At CICIL we call it "relationship building." And so we certainly didn't ‑‑ I did not go out into the community in search of an Asian American board member or a Latinx board member, that's not what I did at all. But because I came to CICIL with relationships that I had built in very diverse communities in the Des Moines Metro area, I came here already knowing individuals who would meet the federal mandate with regards to disability, our professionals in the nonprofit sector or one of the other professional sectors in Des Moines, and are also diverse in other capacities. And so it wasn't a case of me scrambling to find people to meet needs and, you know, insert tokenized people into board positions. That wasn't the case at all. I was fortunate enough that I was able to tap into my network of relationships that I have built and recruit very diverse people to have an interest in the board.

And my message to these individuals was very much centered around the importance of diverse communities themselves becoming culturally competent with regards to the disabled people within their segment of the population. And so Asian Americans experience disability within their community. African Americans do. Every community has people who are disabled within their community. And my selling point to people, as I was recruiting them to the board was, this is a great opportunity to give a voice to the disabled people in your community. By sitting on this board, you will be able to facilitate conversations on behalf of either yourself or of people in your community who are disabled that have not been had in Central Iowa or anywhere in Iowa before.

And so that was a prospect and continues to be a prospect that is very exciting to people. And so getting people interested who are diverse into joining the board fortunately has not been an issue for us. And so I feel very grateful that that has been the case for us.

My feedback or guidance to anybody that is listening and is wanting to diversify their board and might not be a ‑‑ have access to a network of diverse people already is, you know, do it through the six degrees means. If you have an acquaintance or a colleague that you know of who might not necessarily be involved in the disability rights movement but might be a diverse person, don't be afraid to just be really honest with them and tell them, look, I have a commitment to diversifying the disability rights movement in my area. I am at this organization. We really want to diversify our board. Are you aware of any professionals in your networking realm that, you know, might have an interest in this work or might know somebody that has an interest in this work?

You know, don't be afraid to ask that question. As long as it's framed from that vantage point as opposed to, hey, I really need to find a black guy to join the board, which is ... which would be a very highly offensive manner of recruiting people for the board. We're not looking to tokenize people, certainly.

That can yield really positive results and can help to expand your own network to be more inclusive of diverse people.

So, you know, through six degrees, we're all connected to, you know, really fascinating diverse groups of people. And so, you know, work your network. And as Daisy said, continue to work it all year round, not just during strategic planning or when looking specifically to fill a board position. So ...

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you very much for the rich discussion. That brings us to our second Q&A. As I instructed before, if you have questions, go to the Q&A box on the main webinar screen and just jot them down and we'll do our best to answer them quickly.

I have one in the queue.

Okay. Number one. One of the participants wanted to let you guys know this is a great discussion and maybe this is for ILRU. Would it be possible to get a digital copy of the PowerPoint of this presentation?

And I'm sure it is.

>> CAROL: Yes, this is Carol. Yes, the ‑‑ all the materials will be available on our website. The copy of this presentation and the PowerPoint itself will all be available. So it should be available within a day or so. All right?

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you. Any more questions?

>> CAROL: We have lots of time, so submit your questions. We've got these wonderful presenters ready to answer.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: We have another participant that just wants to thank you guys for the presentation. It was outstanding.

I guess I'll ask a question. I always ask a question.

Organizational culture and infrastructure, the realization of it ... I mean, paper says one thing. How did you guys actualize and continue to actualize what you worked so hard to get down on paper?

Any one of you can answer.

>> REYMA McDEID: Well, I'll jump in. I think that for CICIL it's been easier to actualize the things that we put into writing the past three years because we actually had to, because there was nothing in existence. And so it was a very simple and unfettered process as far as let's put our objectives, our strategic plan, our goals, our policies and procedures into writing and then let's implement them. We didn't fall into what so many orgs ‑‑ the trap that so many orgs fall into, which is investing all this time into crafting all of these documents and then falling into doing things the way that we always did because we literally had no other way. And so that presented us with a really golden opportunity to actively implement what it was that we were putting into writing.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Great. Daisy?

>> DAISY FEIDT: Yeah, I mean, I think for us, I feel like I keep talking about our strategic plan, but it was incredibly important, just having this be a focus of our strategic plan. I think almost ten years ago now. And then that's continued. It helped us put ‑‑ you know, gave the impetus for us to then say, okay, now we need to create a roadmap for actually making progress on these things. And it has, you know, meant, in order to follow those strategic directions, we have had to have internal action plans that we review. You know, we reviewed over the years and just made sure we made progress on. But really I think the strategic plan was the key to getting everything started.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Okay. Great. I have another question that came in. I'm going to direct it to you, Daisy. What was the input of the consumers in the racial justice council? What input did they have?

>> DAISY FEIDT: Yeah, so ‑‑ the racial justice council itself, you know, we had a lot of people of different races on our staff who are part of that council, and so for the council itself, we were really relying on them to help us, and for that council there wasn't ‑‑ at least that I remember, a lot of consumer input ‑‑ although keep in mind this was about ten years ago, so I could be forgetting stuff.

I think for us where consumer input more came was during the strategic planning process, because that did include consumer surveys that gave us input on this issue around intersectionality. But the racial justice council was really a staff‑led effort.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Great. Thank you very much. I have another ILRU question. And maybe you guys have seen it. Someone wanted to know what the transcript ‑‑ wanted to know if the transcript would be available.

>> CAROL: Yes, this is Carol, and the transcript will be available within 24‑48 hours on our website, along with the PowerPoint and the text version of the presentation.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Any other questions?

I have a few more minutes before we move on.

There's a lot of meat that is in this presentation, and I'm going to take time to thank the presenters right now. There are some other things we need to do, but I want to thank you for your work and insight.

And one last question, because this always kind of bothered me.

How do you ensure all the work you have done stays there as a foundation, you know, when you go on?

I know you mentioned, Reyma, things need to be in place when we move on. How do we ensure that?

Or can we ensure it?

>> REYMA McDEID: You've asked a question that pulls at my control freak heartstrings ... [chuckles]

You know, we can do what we can, but ultimately we have to set it free and it does what it does. But as far as your question is concerned, that's something that I think about all the time. It's something I have thought about since my first day at CICIL. I really love this organization. It's kind of like my child. It's only one year younger than my actual human child is. So I feel like I've been raising them both together.

But, you know, long‑term sustainability is an obsession of mine, and you can't have long‑term sustainability without a solid infrastructure. And an infrastructure has to survive current leadership and be able to transition into the hands of the next generation, so to speak.

And so, you know, I think there's an alchemy to this, and, you know, we can do everything we can as far as policies and procedures and bylaws and all of that, but the most important piece as far as ensuring the sustainability of an organization as it changes hands is intentionality.

And so having guidelines, if they're not an actual written policy or procedure, guidelines around succession planning I think is very important at the board level but also at the executive director level for an organization that is my size. For larger organizations, having succession planning at all levels of leadership I think is an important point of consideration.

You know, I think we all have borne witness to an organization that has changed hands and in a significant capacity either at the board chair level or at the executive director/CEO level, and the transition has been rough because there hasn't been a lot of intentionality or planning around that.

And so having guidelines and commitment around that step at the board and staff level I think is absolutely key.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you very much. Do you have anything to add, Daisy, to what she says?

>> DAISY FEIDT: I think Reyma is right on. I do think why this whole topic of infrastructure is important. Because I think having things in the bylaws, which are, again, really appreciated, that suggested, Reyma, and other legacy documents, but, of course, can be changed but are difficult to change, I think is really important if things change hands.

And then just having enough people in the organization who really care about this, that if one person leaves, you know, the full thing doesn't leave with that person. I think those are both really important and I love what Reyma said about succession planning, I think that's important as well.

>> STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you both for your insightful answers. Slide 33, please.

I would like to let everyone know about ‑‑ just give you a preview of the upcoming webinars that we will be having, continuing our discussion on Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality. The next one will be Making New Friends and Playing Well with Others, September 11. The presenters are Ron Halog, Elsa Quezada and myself.

Then September 25th we have Creating a welcoming and Supportive CIL for Diverse Populations and the presenters are Kim Gibson, Lee Schulz and myself. And then at a date to be determined we have Data Mining and Community Mapping to Support Disability, Diversity, and Intersectionality. Carol, I'm going to turn it over to you for wrap‑up.

>> CAROL: All right. I don't see any more questions. So I think we can start wrapping this up.

So directly following the webinar, you will see an evaluation survey to complete on your screen.

The link to the survey can also be found on the training page at ILRU.org. And again, as I said before, we do take your feedback seriously in order to improve programs. I want to thank our presenters and all of you for joining us today.

Bye, everybody!