

**Diversity Catalyst Committee (DCC) Minutes**  
**August 17, 2021, 4:00-5:00 PM ET**

In attendance: Henry Fadamiro (Chair-Texas A&M), Nina Lyon Bennett (Arkansas Pine Bluff), Shannon Archibeque-Engle (Colorado State), Tracy Dougher (Montana State), Brian Raison (Ohio State), Drenda Williams (Office of Budget and Program Analysis, USDA-NIFA), Carrie Castille (Director, USDA-NIFA), Bill Hoffman (Chief of Staff, USDA-NIFA), Majed El-Dweik (Lincoln), Tala Awada (Nebraska), Cindy Morley (SAAESD), Bret Hess (WAAESD), John Dieffenbacher-Krall (Maine), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA)

1. Introductions and opening remarks (Henry/Rick)
  - DCC will meet face to face on Thursday, September 30, 2021 at the ESS meeting in Olympic Valley, CA.
2. Approval of June 15, 2021 notes (attached, Henry)
  - **The notes of June 15, 2021 were approved unanimously.**
3. Joint COPS debrief, status of the Call to Action (Rick)
  - The DCC call to action was approved by ESCOP at its business meeting in July. The call will be distributed to directors through the regional executive directors.
4. Proposed USDA goals, through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (NIFA representatives: Drenda Williams, Director - Equal Opportunity Staff and Civil Rights; Carrie Castille, Director – NIFA; Bill Hoffman, Chief of Staff – NIFA)
  - Bill Hoffman and Carrie Castille shared a draft of new USDA Goals which are not to be distributed beyond the DCC.
  - USDA is seeking feedback from the DCC and ESCOP on these goals to help develop its programming. USDA wants these goals to be achievable and for everyone in the LGU system to see themselves, their institutions, and the people they represent, reflected in these goals.
  - NIFA leadership is supportive of DCC's call to action statement: it's timely and "we" have to be bold.
  - John Dieffenbacher-Krall commented on Goal #2:
    - If tribal people can have their ancestral territories recognized and have access to traditional foods, this could address some negative health outcomes for indigenous peoples. Negative health outcomes may arise as the result of a Western diet that is forced on indigenous communities.
  - Rick Rhodes commented on Goal #5:
    - Local food chains to enhance processing, capacity and security is important. There is an intersectionality between food chains, underrepresented producers and low income consumers. Future RFAs must address the supply and accessibility opportunities posed by the intersectionality.
  - Shannon Archibeque-Engle asked: Do the goals prioritize participatory action research (PAR)?
    - When talking about equitable food systems, it's important that LGU representatives conduct research as well as community members as active participants in research.
    - Carrie Castille suggested that local and regional food policy councils can be involved, and in her observation, the most successful local food councils across the country have strong connections to LGUs.

- Nina Lyon Bennett followed: Not only is participatory research important, but also qualitative research. It takes more than statistics to tell the "story"
  - Brian Raison mentioned he is currently teaching students that have "other ways of knowing"... so PAR/ qualitative research is important for outreach to low-resource populations.
  - NIFA believes it is important for USDA Grant panels to reflect the demographics of America. USDA is looking at both the makeup of its panels and the language in its RFAs.
    - Is there space in an RFA / does the RFA speak to small farmers? Farms that want to pursue ethnic markets? Indigenous growers? How can RFAs be changed if these groups don't see themselves in the request?
  - RFAs will be drafted in "plain speak" so that all language can be understood by non-academics.
  - Shannon mentioned a quote from Reverend Dr. Jamie Washington: "*Just because you are doesn't mean you understand, just because you aren't doesn't mean you don't*". It is important not to tokenize representation on panels and committees by filling positions based only on race/ethnicity/gender. Content area expertise is important to consider, e.g., representation from sociologists, human development and family studies.
  - **As a follow-up to this discussion, the DCC will provide comments in writing to Bill Hoffman, Carrie Castille, and Drenda Williams on the draft USDA goals**
  - **The slide deck of draft USDA goals will be shared with the DCC.**
5. Informational item:
- The DCC is invited to attend an upcoming webinar entitled *Land-Grab Universities: Owning the Truth and Sharing the Path to Making Amends*, hosted by Steve Gavazzi (Ohio State) and the co-authors of the Land-Grab Universities Report. The webinar will be held on October 6, 2021 from 12-2pm ET.