



Jacksonville • Onslow  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN, 2018-2021



October 2018

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



To all Chamber Members and Stakeholders:

I am pleased to share with you the Chamber’s first Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. The plan enhances our ongoing actions and provides a more strategic focus on diversity and inclusion to enable our organization to establish and sustain a high-performing, and inclusive membership that reflects the rich diversity of Jacksonville and Onslow County.

The Chamber is putting forth this plan because we recognize the value of building and sustaining diversity at all levels of the organization. I personally believe that rich diversity yields a stronger organization that’s better able to achieve its mission and produce greater results. This type of plan helps us organize a systematic effort to improve diversity and inclusion and track our progress as an organization toward our goals over time.

It is our desire that the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, will help strengthen a culture that promotes equity, collaboration and mutual respect. The goals of the plan are ambitious and will take time and effort. We are committed to achieving the goals as we implement the plan.

This commitment to diversity and inclusion are integral to the mission and core values of the Chamber and are a proper reflection of our local community, where serving others is a way of life.

*Cindy Edwards*

Cindy L. Edwards, 2018 Chair  
Board of Directors

# INTRODUCTION

This Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan 2018-2021 reflects the Chamber and Board of Director's initiative on diversity engagement and inclusion, which is a shared responsibility of all Board Members, Chamber Staff and Chamber Members.

Based on a series of consultations with Chamber and community stakeholders, the plan sets a course forward with goals and strategies for the first three years. These are building blocks for development that will be implemented and measured over time.

Implementation of the plan involves a myriad of stakeholders at all levels of the organization and requires the active involvement of leaders and staff throughout the Chamber. The Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan 2018-2021 builds on the Chamber's mission and values to include: connecting business, community and military; excellence; equity and providing value to its members.

Broadly defined, diversity refers to characteristics that make individuals different from one another; that may include race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, national origin, or other differences.

Inclusion is how an organization leverages diversity to create a collaborative environment where all individuals are treated with equity and respect, have equal access to opportunity, and can feel fully engaged to contribute to the organization's mission and goals.

## The Vision:

A membership which embraces its collective differences and values how those differences enhance the Chamber's ability, mission and work. Actively engaging a diverse and inclusive community to strengthen relationships and outcomes in the Chamber's business, military and community goals throughout Jacksonville and Onslow County.

Our goal is to attract, engage and retain members from all walks of life and backgrounds. This goal is grounded in the organization's core values of excellence and equity. It requires a culture of inclusion where all individuals feel respected, are treated equitably, have access to opportunity and can feel fully engaged to contribute to the Chamber's mission and goals.

# OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

## D&I Strategic Objectives:

To support the realization of our vision, we have established the following strategic objectives:

- **Diversity** - Improve the representation of diverse populations, women, SDVOSB\* and people with disabilities through outreach, education, engagement and management best practices to achieve results.      \*Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business
- **Inclusion** – Create and sustain an inclusive environment where individuals and groups are welcomed, respected and valued to foster innovation and promote diverse engagement through awareness and leadership training.
- **Communications** - Ensure that diversity & inclusion initiatives, actions, and results are transparent to all key stakeholders.
- **External Relations** - Engage various external stakeholder groups that support and serve the Chamber’s values and interests including diversity suppliers.
- **Accountability** - Hold leadership accountable for diversity & inclusion goals and objectives.

## D&I Expected Intermediate Outcomes:

- Chamber membership and involvement at all levels will better reflect our richly diverse community and business environment.
- Engagement and retention rates for members, committees, and leadership will improve and reflect the composition of the region.
- The Chamber will devote leadership time and resources to enhance and sustain equity, diversity engagement and inclusion.

# STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

The Chamber reinforces its commitment to diversity and inclusion through a variety of communication channels and educational outreach efforts aimed at both internal and external audiences. For example, the organization will develop and maintain a Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan – approved and supported by senior leadership – to guide efforts. The organization also implements policies and practices related to workforce diversity and inclusion in a manner that complies with all applicable laws.

## Strategy 1: Communicate the Chamber's D&I Plan & Objectives through a variety of methods.

- Utilize internal and external communications and media channels to communicate Plan objectives and standards.
- Post the Plan where easily accessible to members and prospective members such as online member portal, front desk, membership office, etc.
- Publish D&I Information and events to members, employees, and the public through newsletters, email, and other appropriate channels.
- Include progress and challenges on D&I objectives in published reports to leadership and D&I stakeholders.
- Include D&I activities, milestones and outcomes in the Board's Annual Performance Report

## Strategy 2: Strengthen and sustain understanding of the interdependence of diversity, inclusion and opportunity.

- The organization will provide periodic workshops, forums, and networking opportunities designed to educate and promote discussion on topics that impact D&I in today's

business climate, such as unconscious bias, generational and cultural differences, women-led businesses, employment of persons with disabilities, etc.

- Senior leadership will periodically provide D&I training, hospitality training and leadership development opportunities to staff.
- Strengthen D&I awareness, knowledge and understanding by collaborating with community partners to facilitate and co-promote availability of resources such as e-books, articles, videos, classes, discussions or other resources related to D&I and business.

### Strategy 3: Attract a diverse pool of candidates for involvement at all levels by ensuring strategic outreach and recruiting process are accessible to all segments of communities.

- The Chamber will ensure outreach and recruitment for members, volunteers, interns, and other positions include a variety of resources such as professional associations, faith-based associations, publications, social media, or others to maximize the diversity of the pool of candidates.
- Host or participate in outreach events, forums, discussions and/or career fairs to help underrepresented audiences understand the Chamber, its mission, purpose and goals.
- Clarify connections between programs, opportunities and audiences, such as Workforce Development for Education; Governmental Affairs for legislation; etc.
- Ensure outreach and recruitment strategies are designed to draw from all segments of society, including those who are underrepresented.

### Strategy 4: Foster an environment that encourages agile, diverse and collaborative pursuit of goals.

- Reinforce positive cross-collaboration and diversity of thought within the organization. For example, expanding collaborative forums and sessions between the Small Business Committee and the Business Diversity Council (Minority Business Services Committee, MBSC).
- Create opportunities for collaboration with community stakeholders such as faith-based groups to facilitate business resource opportunities and support of minority-owned business development.

- Strengthen programs that encourage diversity engagement, such as MED week, and recognition of women and other groups in business.

## Strategy 5: Hold leaders accountable in the implementation of the plan and pursuit of goals.

- Educate and train management staff on effective D&I management competencies for inclusion.
- Support the Business Diversity Council (MBSC) as Diversity Liaisons in outreach, data collection and reporting efforts.
- Encourage the Division and Diversity Liaisons to maintain an open dialogue with senior leadership and/or the Board of Directors for reporting of progress, challenges or concerns, at least once per quarter.
- Seek continuing input from stakeholders related to D&I needs, opportunities, activities, and progress or challenges through a variety of means, such as surveys, interviews or calls.

# TIMELINES & MILESTONES

## First Year Activities: 2018

This strategic plan is ambitious and comprehensive; therefore, it must be accomplished in stages. During 2018 a series of conversations were initiated out of the Executive Committee of the Chamber which gave rise to Boardroom discussions, meetings with the Minority Business Services Committee Officers and members, as well as a series of listening sessions where members, community leaders and diverse business owners offered up meaningful observations, suggestions for improvement, strategic action ideas and hopes for the future.

These anecdotal notes were compiled into a working draft of communication, outreach, education and programmatic action items for consideration. While every single suggestion is not specifically enumerated in this document, the spirit of the effort is captured here at a broad level. The Business Diversity Council and Staff have a complete list of the suggested ideas to pull from as the plan is implemented over the next three to five years and beyond.

It's important to note, that we simply could not host every person who may have ideas to contribute. It is likely that a person who was not in the listening sessions may have a pivotal suggestion that is needed for the process. By definition, diversity and inclusion reveal that we are better and stronger with varied backgrounds, viewpoints and thought processes at work together. To that end, it is critical that we continue to listen to stakeholders and gather feedback as we move forward.

TIMELINE	
2018	Gather initial data Formulate Draft Plan Review & Approve Plan Announce Plan Launch
2019	Begin Implementation: - Communicate Plan - Surveys, est. baseline data - Division/Liaison Sessions - Initial Outreach Efforts - First Annual Report
2020	Assess Progress, Revise: - Assess Communication - Monitor & Assess Actions - Gather Feedback Data - Evaluate Plan - Course Correct, as needed - Second Annual Report
2021 forward	Expand efforts & continue the process of evaluating progress, inclusive climate and diverse representation.

# SUSTAINABILITY

This Strategic Plan identifies broad goals and intermediate outcomes to be achieved within the next three years and beyond. By setting these broad milestones, the Chamber will be able to measure progress toward longer-term outcomes and make course corrections or adjustments along the way in collaboration with Business Diversity Council leadership and all stakeholders.

The Chamber seeks to enhance practices and strategies to equip leaders to manage diversity, measure results and refine approaches while building a stronger culture of inclusion for members, volunteers, interns, staff and board leadership.

Management at all levels is responsible for executing the Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Specifically, within the Chamber's organizational structure, the Business Diversity Council housed under the Division of Partnerships will be the focal point of outreach efforts, oversight and reporting.

To the greatest degree possible quantitative metrics such as tracking data, and qualitative metrics, such as survey results, will be used to assess Diversity & Inclusion Performance.