

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION: THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Why Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Matters to NWF

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF)'s mission is the conservation of America's wildlife and wild places. To advance this important work, the Federation seeks to limit the decline of species, protect habitat, and ensure clean air, water and land for all living beings. In order to fulfill our mission at scale, NWF must successfully engage and leverage all Americans. To maintain and increase NWF's relevancy and achieve NWF's mission amid a changing nation and growing challenges, it must embrace and demonstrate diversity, equity, inclusion and justice – including urban partnerships and tribal work – throughout the organization. That commitment is driven from the head of the organization, board members, staff, and throughout its partnerships.

How Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Make NWF Smarter, More Innovative and More Financially

Stable

According to Pew Research, “Americans are more racially and ethnically diverse than in the past, and the U.S. is projected to be even more diverse in the coming decades. By 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority.”^[1] This demonstrates that as national demographics shift, NWF has the opportunity to become a powerful coalition by fully embracing DEI. Doing so provides what many conservation groups are lacking: building authentic relationships among diverse constituencies from communities around the country under a shared mission. The political power that comes from being a truly diverse, equitable and inclusive coalition is significant. It can help NWF to become the most politically influential conservation organization ever envisioned, with 11 million people and 2,500 partner organizations engaged in a “conservation army.” Furthermore, by being an inclusive organization, NWF would allow unique perspectives, opportunities and collaborations to arise, which is a strategic advantage when activating a strong conservation army.

Diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice provide NWF, its affiliates and partners with a competitive advantage in the following areas:

- Attract and retain the best talent;
 - 63% of senior executives from around the world believe that diversity and inclusion programs will help them become more competitive by being able to access top talent^[2];
 - A McKinsey & Company article states: “[m]ore diverse companies, we believe, are better able to win top talent and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making, and all that leads to a virtuous cycle of increasing returns.”^[3]

- Foster higher creativity and productivity and better decision making by creating an inclusive work environment that fosters differing points of view;
 - University of Michigan professor of complex systems, political science and economics Scott E. Page has found that “[d]iverse groups of people bring to organizations more and different ways of seeing a problem and, thus, faster/better ways of solving it.” [4]
 - When it comes to profits, which is the mission of private, for-profit companies, “companies in the top quartile for gender or racial and ethnic diversity are more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians.” [5]
 - Diverse groups are more innovative, according to the Harvard Business Review [6]
- Develop a positive reputation for its brand and in its affiliates and partners;
 - A PwC survey found that 86% of female and 74% of male millennials consider employers’ policies on diversity, equity and inclusion when deciding which company to work for; [7]
- Open up important avenues for attracting new members and potential partnerships with a broad range of diverse civic clubs, fraternities/sororities and chambers of commerce;
- Spur financial support by implementing key indicators of success for DEI; and
 - Currently, 89.75% of NWF’s financial Supporters are Caucasian; 4.75% are Hispanic and 2.44% are African American
- Build more durable, lasting and innovative solutions to protect wildlife.

Furthermore, NWF’s unique structure, composed of affiliates, regional offices as well as partnerships, provides an opportunity for the organization to deepen and broaden diversity. NWF is by design a big tent organization. It should continuously build upon that foundation, by engaging new constituencies to participate via the NWF affiliates, regional offices and partnerships.

Funding

As NWF seeks to operationalize our recent Strategic Plan, it is important to align our vision with funding opportunities that enable us to honor those commitments. Understanding the needs and expectations of the funding community is an important component to sustaining our work. The Kresge Foundation, with a \$3.6 billion endowment, has taken a new approach to grants focusing now on expanding opportunities by investing in American cities. “More than 80 percent of our nation’s population lives in and around cities.” They are looking to build environmental and economic development resilience in cities around the country. NWF has a unique opportunity to re-engage funders like Kresge given our ability to do outreach at the ground level and by engaging new and strategic partners. In May, the MacArthur Foundation committed \$19 million in grants to broaden the availability of the economic and health benefits of cleaner, cheaper energy.

“The Foundation is supporting nonprofit and research groups to work with state policymakers and business leaders on low carbon energy projects and policies that benefit businesses and consumers. MacArthur is also helping strengthen organizations that give a voice to underrepresented communities most impacted by climate change in the policymaking process.”[5] These are just two recent examples of the funding community specifically seeking expertise from the communities that they fund on diverse outreach to scale their conservation efforts.

Additionally, having a thriving diversity, equity, inclusion and justice core adds strength to an organization’s fundraising prowess. It leads to an expansion of new organizations that may contribute, including but not limited to diverse civic and fraternal organizations, and chambers of commerce. By being able to reach out to in an organic manner, due to a previously established reputation for fostering diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice, there is a greater potential for contributions from previously untapped sources.

Strategic Plan

NWF’s recently finalized Strategic Plan clearly sets forth five metrics for success. Together, we will:

1. Ensure a majority of Americans and policymakers are aware of our nation’s wildlife crisis by activating 11 million people and joining forces with 2,500 partner organizations as part of America’s conservation army;
2. Put 25% of America’s at-risk wildlife species on a path to recovery, protect and better manage habitat and wildlife on 300 million acres of public and tribal land, and restore and enhance the resilience of 40 million acres of critical private land and water habitat by securing at least \$2 billion in additional annual conservation funding and advancing 21st century wildlife management practices in partnership with state and federal wildlife agencies;
3. Rebuild America’s conservation ethic by engaging 25 million young people across 20,000 schools in environmental education and recurring outdoor experiences;
4. Increase the relevance of wildlife conservation nationwide by partnering on local water, wildlife habitat, and environmental justice projects in 1,000 diverse urban and rural communities; and
5. Defend America’s democratic public trust resources (public lands, waterways, and wildlife) for current and future generations from threats of divestiture, reduced access, or privatization.

The political ability, economic growth and moral compass of NWF are dependent upon on the successful implementation of a more deliberate, comprehensive and inclusive effort to operationalize the Strategic Plan. NWF must engage and represent the full and complete diversity of America as it continues to build its army of conservationists. To demonstrate its political weight and influence, NWF must harness a broad and deep constituency from all backgrounds to advance key conservation objectives. Economic growth requires that NWF engage donors, affiliates, partners and members who are diverse in all imaginable facets. Lastly, people, especially people of color and/or those historically disadvantaged need to be embraced by the conservation movement because it is a moral imperative.

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- [1] <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/>
 - [2] <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/why-diversity-matters-in-the-workplace/>
 - [3] <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>
 - [4] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/columnist/2015/07/21/why-diversity-matters-your-tech-company/30419871/>
 - [5] <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>
 - [6] <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>
 - [7] <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/about/diversity/iwd/iwd-female-talent-report-web.pdf>