

# The Catalyst Team

Evolution, Benefits, Obstacles and  
Hopes

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# Evaluation of CASD Project

- Climate assessment
- Profile assessment of workforce
- Written survey of professional development, hiring, promotion, retention, and evaluation practices
- Review organizational mission statements, strategic plans, and diversity plans
- Key extension administration interviews
- State Coordinator interviews regarding catalyst team activities

# Methodology

- Face –to-Face Interviews were held with the Catalyst Teams in each of the first seven states of the Change Agent States for Diversity Project

# Data collected from the following questions will be shared:

- To what extent has your state's participation in the CASD project has an impact on your organization?
- What benefits do you feel are derived from working collaboratively as a consortium, as opposed to working as individuals?
- How has your Catalyst Team evolved since it's beginning?
- What have been some of the struggles your catalyst team has encountered in doing its work?

To what extent has your state's participation in the CASD project had an impact on your organization?

- Majority indicated a *high impact* (61%)
- Many indicated *some impact* (30%)
- Fewer indicated a *very high impact* (9%)

## ■ Type of impact – themes that emerged

- Awareness and Validation
- Focus and Action
- Organization-Wide Effort
- Future Impact

# Awareness

- Climate assessment and profile assessments created awareness

*“I would guess that the climate assessment also would impact a lot of people. They felt things were not as kosher as they thought it would be, but I think it made a lot of people aware that we are not perfect. We need some work done...It kind of opened the eyes of a lot of people. We have some things that need to be addressed.”*

*“The impact of the assessment survey and the profile assessment – was a real wake-up call. I think it really legitimized the fact that this work has to be done.”*

*“The original climate survey was a trigger to a lot of things. It jumps you to a whole other level.”*

# Validation

*“I think the presence of this group has validated this [diversity] being an organizational agenda, not an administrative agenda.”*

*“Since the Change Agent States has been organized, it has reaffirmed administration’s involvement and dedication to improving related issues.”*

# Focus and Action

- The Catalyst Team worked as a vehicle for focusing on *“process and structure from which recommendations could come.”*

*“I think the level of deliberate effort around diversity as an organization has been enhanced by the presence of this group.”*

*“It encouraged us to really be more focused on what we are doing.”*

*“It resulted in an increased and deliberate collaboration between 4H and agriculture educators in programming efforts between 1862 and 1890 institutions.”*

*“It helped us to move from the focus of policy on affirmative action to that of a much broader diversity initiative.”*

*“The Catalyst Team has helped to centralize our work.”*

*“It brought people to the table to start a dialogue that had not been started before. It has made it okay to talk about these issues.”*

# An Organization-Wide Effort

- The Catalyst Team approach recognizes the importance of the involvement of people at various levels in the organization.
- Responsibility to address issues of diversity necessitate the involvement of county educators, faculty **and top level** administrators.

# Potential Future Impact

- Most team members saw the past work of the project as effective but as the beginning in a long-term effort.

*“I think we have started the ball at the top of the hill and I think we are going to get some momentum. We are going to move from **some impact to high impact.**”*

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

Importance of bonding

*“You know one message that I feel strongly about sending to others who are starting their catalyst teams is you have to do the self-awareness part of it. You have to do the bonding and you have got to feel like a family even though families fight or whatever.”*

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

## ■ Created a Vision

Developing a vision included clarifying goals and developing strategic plans. Furthermore, development of vision preceded the teams actually taking action to make change in the areas that they saw as important.

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

- Many teams moved from bonding > to the development of vision and goals > to a focus on professional development

*“We moved more into professional development to help all of us learn more about the various issues and concerns – more focus on helping each other learn more.”*

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

- Began infusion of diversity initiatives

*“The importance of making diversity at the core of extension services, as opposed to an appendage of those services.”*

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

- Several teams broadened the level of membership and scope of work to become not only an Extension committee, but a College-wide committee.
  - Committee members now include extension educators and staff at all levels, department faculty within extension, as well as, faculty from outside of extension, central university administrators, youth, and representatives from community organizations

# Evolution of the Catalyst Teams

- Additional ways in which the teams have evolved:
  - “From a discussion /complaint group to a planning and goal-driven team”

# Benefits Derived From Working Collaboratively as a Consortium

- Five major themes emerged:
  - Idea and information sharing

*“Well the obvious thing that I see and taking an example from the national diversity conference is getting the chance to see what other states are doing and what is working for them ... allowing us to be able to share our experiences.”*

*“We learn good ideas from others – no need to reinvent the wheel.”*

# Benefits Derived From Working Collaboratively as a Consortium

## – Resource Sharing

*Specifically, the collective resources of the consortium allowed states to afford bringing in outside experts – experts that the organizations and states themselves may not have been able to access on their own.*

# Benefits Derived From Working Collaboratively as a Consortium

- A network of **Moral Support** : This network offered a sense of common purpose

*“It is more than just to share frustrations and successes with others that are doing the same thing because it lets us know that we are not in it alone...that other people are struggling with the same kinds of questions and cultural changes that we are. So it is a support structure and I think it has been helpful.”*

- A network of **Moral Support** : This network offered a sense of common purpose

*“It is helpful to see numbers of passionate people working toward the same thing. I do not feel little. I feel empowered. I got troops behind me. That keeps me going.”*

- *“It gives you a sense of being connected to support. And when you get discouraged or slowed down or behind the eight ball, somebody will help you out.”*

# Benefits Derived From Working Collaboratively as a Consortium

## – Accountability

- The consortium provided a source of “***external discipline***” to motivate teams to be productive. One example of this accountability provided by interview participants was the pressure that some states received from other states within the consortium to move forward and complete their climate assessments.

– Accountability

*“It keeps us on track. It is a push because when you talk with other CASD states, boy you want to be doing something. You do not want to be sitting still when everyone reports out.”*

# Benefits Derived From Working Collaboratively as a Consortium

– **National Visibility** to the diversity initiatives

*“National visibility attracted people to be involved in the catalyst team.”*

- People are attracted to being involved in a national effort.

*“The fact that there was visibility to this national effort has kept the momentum going.”*

# Struggles Encountered by Teams in Doing Their Work

- Five major themes emerged
  - Misconceptions and resistance
  - Stigma that accompanies the word *diversity*
    - “Using the term *diversity* in the title of a workshop may reduce the number of people who attend. Labeling it *diversity* turns people off.”

- Apathy or lack of awareness that there are issues related to diversity
  - *“Why are we talking about it?”*
  - *“It is perceived as in your face or pushy – of making trouble where there is no trouble. [People ask ]– why do we have to do this because everything is just fine?”*
  - Frustration that more executive leaders have not participated more in diversity training.

- Narrow definition of diversity

- *“People just assume that diversity is about race. That is the first thing that comes to mind. A struggle is that diversity is bigger than just one or two things.”*

- Resistance to deal with diversity

- Uncertainty regarding the reaction one may get for doing diversity work. *“How many poison darts are you willing to have aimed at you?”*

# Struggles Encountered by Teams in Doing Their Work

## ■ Structural diversity

- The lack of diversity in the system can make it more difficult to penetrate the system and affect it with various diversity initiatives

# Struggles Encountered by Teams in Doing Their Work

## ■ Distance

- Distance made collaboration and interaction within some states difficult

*I think distance creates a struggle for us in terms of our team being able to get together face to face. So we do a lot of our work by conference calls and sometimes interactive video, but I think that is harder. Those venues do not make it as easy as sitting around the table and talking to each other in direct contact.*

# Struggles Encountered by Teams in Doing Their Work

- Turnover and Downsizing - loss of team members results in:
  - Uncertainty that accompanies loss of a key team member
  - Time required to build cohesion among new members
  
- Downsizing
  - Hampers the ability to hire more diverse workforce
  - Failure of county government to pick up costs to support a position focused on diverse populations

# Struggles Encountered by Teams in Doing Their Work

## ■ Time

- Work of catalyst team often viewed as *additional work*, as opposed to work integral to the jobs of team members
- Team members lack the time to make progress in diversity initiatives as fast as they would like

- *“From a leader’s perspective...it has been real frustrating for us because we would really like the effort to move even more quickly than it is, and yet we just physically are unable to make it...We did not do what we said we were going to do just because I could not get to that.”*

# Other comments From Catalyst Team Members

- *“Personally, I have grown tremendously by being on the team. I have grown to the point where I was a sponge at first and now I am a saturated sponge. I am leaking water. It has brought me that far.”*
- *There is not a meeting that we hold when the Dean speaks that somehow diversity is not mentioned. I mean it is mentioned every time. It is pervasive and so it affects the system. When you hear it from the Dean, you know it is important.”*

- *“Recognition that there is and will be tension and it must be managed. This work is not feel good efforts – but addressing real issues from a systems approach. We still have a ways to do to have a system that takes advantage of the differences we bring.”*

# Finally

- The importance of future persistence:

*“I equate this work to dropping a pebble in the pond and the ripples going out. There are those that we may not move...there are those that we may move from A to C...there are those who will move further, but whatever movement that we get in the system is positive systemic organizational change...we have to capitalize and stay focused on it.”*