

**WORKFORCE DIVERSITY**

# Retention Project

## RETENTION SOLUTIONS

- Employer Policies & Practices
- Community Support & Networking
- Accountability for Leaders
- Individual Support & Advocacy

**PARTNERS IN  
DIVERSITY**

Making a Difference  
Since 2005

# RETENTION SOLUTIONS

## Employer Policies & Practices

*Retention solutions based on findings from Partners in Diversity's Workforce Diversity Retention Project surveys and interviews conducted in 2019.*

Ideas that employers can implement to improve or change internal policies including recruiting professionals of color or in responding to concerns or complaints from employees of color.

**1. The role of human resources is be an advocate for culture.**

As such HR professionals need to use a cultural lens to help employees of color feel more connected and able to bring their whole self to work. Build partnerships and help with connections to lessen feelings of isolation and loneliness.

**2. Create a model for a safe, confidential and supportive process to resolve formal and informal incidents or complaints that create barriers to equity and fairness in the workplace.**

Many existing structures place the employee who is raising the issue in a position of being retaliated against. An anti-retaliation policy is needed to convey policies to assure all employees know what they should and should not be doing. Complaints can be managed by a third party such as Allvoices.co, which provides a space for employees to submit complaints anonymously. Include policies on how to repair and move forward for employees.

**3. Develop an equity lens policy as a tool to review all other policies.**

This will assure a fair and equitable workplace environment. For example: see websites for equity policies at [Multnomah County](#) or the [Port of Portland](#).

**4. Avoid tokenism in the workplace.**

Tokenism is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of equality. Do not burden employees of color through this practice.

**5. Fund, support and empower employee resource groups (ERG) to create networks to connect within the organization and in the community, as well as with other employer ERGs and professional organizations.**

**6. Prioritize retention efforts.**

Invest in diversity recruiting with adequate practices and efforts to retain and develop talent for the long term.

**7. Adopt an equity certification for managers and leaders, provide resources and training for all employees.**

Be active in an employee resource group in a significant way as part of the certification. Make diversity, equity, inclusion goals a part of performance reviews, interviews for advancement, etc.

**8. Use employee resource groups to communicate the challenges and opportunities that employees of color might experience when relocating from a more diverse community to Oregon and southwest Washington.**

Share the history of racism and “Portland nice” so it is not a surprise to newcomers.

**9. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are generally provided as an employee benefit.**

The Workforce Diversity Retention Project documented the need for more accessible, culturally-appropriate professional practitioners available to provide counseling, stress management, wellness support and resources for employees of color. Enhanced resources, in addition to the regular EAP model, could be a valuable resource.

**10. Implement a more robust off-boarding (exit interview) process to learn why employee resigned to better improve internal culture to retain talented employees of color and other diverse backgrounds.**

Engage employee resource groups to brainstorm retention strategies based upon the feedback of exit interviews. Consult a culturally appropriate professional practitioner.

**11. Evaluate and replace HR hiring practices that unconsciously discriminate against employees of color.**

For example, include methods to evaluate the qualifications in job descriptions and require all hiring panel members to take unconscious bias training.

**12. Evaluate and replace HR operational practices using an equity policy lens that recognizes the differences in cultural perception of quality performance.**

Examples of operational practices to review include: job evaluations, improvement plans, rewards and bonuses, pay equity and pay transparency, and opportunities to develop career paths, such as stretch assignments.

For more information about the Workforce Diversity Retention Project contact:

**Partners in Diversity**

503-224-8684 | [PartnersinDiversity.org](http://PartnersinDiversity.org)

# RETENTION SOLUTIONS

## Community Support & Networking

*Retention solutions based on findings from Partners in Diversity's Workforce Diversity Retention Project surveys and interviews conducted in 2019.*

Ways to leverage existing Partners in Diversity, government, and other community-based programs to support newly-arrived professionals of color.

- 1. Provide employees with information and access to culturally-specific organizations and resources (at on-boarding and beyond).**

This includes social and professional opportunities for employees of color to gather outside of work. Companies need to also invest in these activities and organizations.

- 2. Not all employers have employee resource groups (ERGs).**

Find ways to collaborate with other employers or community groups. For example, companies with large employee resource groups can invite smaller employers to their social gatherings and events. Examples include Community Leadership Academies, Coalition of Communities of Color Bridges program, etc.

- 3. Create leadership development opportunities by supporting employees of color to join boards or committees in the community, and integrate this into their work.**

This mutually benefits the employee, the employer and the community.

- 4. Support and sustain cultural opportunities in the workplace and community.**

Annual heritage months (such as Black History Month, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American History Month, etc.) are great, but people want recognition and activities throughout the year, not just one month out of the year.

- 5. Recognize employers for doing great diversity, equity, and inclusion work.**

An example would be a community celebration or award ceremony.

- 6. Create opportunities to invest in the diverse local economy through partnerships.**

This includes suppliers and contractors that support minority business groups (e.g., Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME), Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber (HMC), etc.).

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# RETENTION SOLUTIONS

## Accountability for Leaders

*Retention solutions based on findings from Partners in Diversity's Workforce Diversity Retention Project surveys and interviews conducted in 2019.*

Leadership buy-in and leadership's understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion work is critical to be successful. This includes strategies for creating executive-level accountability and ways to measure results.

- 1. CEOs and boards play a critical role in driving diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the workplace.**  
They must be accountable in creating an inclusive workplace.
- 2. Tie the compensation of CEO and senior leaders to the adopted diversity, equity and inclusion metrics and goals.**  
Consider implementing a "diversity kicker" as an incentive. The leadership and accountability must start at the top and be embraced throughout the organization. Use networks such as Partners in Diversity's CEO Cohort and other leadership networks to learn and build an equity lens for member employers.
- 3. Implement yearly employee surveys and assessment with the first assessment serving as a baseline.**  
Create an inclusion index using data from assessments (this is similar to quality indexes). This index would include metrics in training, budgets, emotional intelligence, and other measurements that reflect the mindset, commitment, passion and authenticity of top leaders.
- 4. Create a transparent process to advance employees of color into leadership roles.**  
Create formal and informal mentor/coaching/sponsorship programs that recognize that diverse teams require different management skills. Front load all fellowships, internships, and scholarships to get a jump start on recruiting people of color.
- 5. Understand and recognize that discrimination and racism exist and have negative impacts on the organization.**  
It is essential for top leaders and elected officials to embrace their role in building an anti-racist culture.

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# RETENTION SOLUTIONS

## Individual Support & Advocacy

*Retention solutions based on findings from Partners in Diversity's Workforce Diversity Retention Project surveys and interviews conducted in 2019.*

Strategies to provide an emotional and mental support system for professionals of color and strategies to address unsuccessful transitions.

**1. Understand Oregon and the Pacific Northwest's history of racism.**

Provide employees and potential employees with information about Oregon's historical white supremacy structure and how it continues to impact our culture today. Knowledge of history will help current and new employees understand the significance of race and culture in the community and workplace, and hopefully inspire work to change it.

**2. Advocate for improving the mental health infrastructure to serve the needs of communities of color.**

This could include attracting professionals of color to careers in mental health professions. Address the stress of relocating to a non-diverse community. For example: incorporating a culturally competent EAP service designed for employees of color.

**3. Connect employees with culturally-specific organizations.**

Creating a template or model for culturally relevant on-boarding that would include resources and best practices. Must be sensitive to the needs or interest of the new employee and family members. Provide resources for social engagement and culturally-specific services. Examples include: [OHSU Center for Diversity and Inclusion's Community Resource Guide](#), [Travel Portland](#) and [Travel Oregon](#) website, and minority-focused newspapers.

**4. Create formal mentor and sponsor programs for employees of color that recognize the dynamics of cultural differences between mentor and mentee.**

**5. Design strategies that may be an umbrella to include smaller companies (members) that don't have the resources to implement.**

This may include employee resource groups and diversity, equity and inclusion training, etc.

**6. Provide services for the “trailing spouse” (a person who follows their partner to another city because of work).**

Help with job search, community connections, and events that focus on activities for new employees, partners and families.

**7. Prepare a checklist for employers to use to achieve “a great place to work” status in using diversity, equity and inclusion standards.**

**8. Train and provide each newcomer with an “onboarding mentor” to assist with the transition to the workplace and community.**

Nike has developed this program.

**9. Partners in Diversity or another organization could create a directory of member volunteers who offer to meet with job candidates who are curious about the experiences of others who have relocated to Oregon or southwest Washington.**

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