

## Building DEI Into STEM Start-Ups



### Click Through Training Not Enough

Building an inclusive organizational culture takes intention and has many benefits, but knowing what tactics - applied when, by, and to whom - requires know-how to achieve the desired results. (Annual team refreshers and click-through training will not give rise to genuine systemic change in how your people work together inclusively.)

At Diversity North, our evidence-based method brings people together through “generative interactions”. ***A generative interaction is an***

***opportunity for diverse groups to meet over time with a common goal and purpose. This type of work helps develop relationships and an enhanced ability to see past differences in individuals' talents and strengths.***

Consider, for example, our current work with a ~50 employee, ambitious biotech company that has a goal of maximizing employee retention, a major factor in cost and speed of success for fast moving product/research & discovery science organizations. For them, we focused on a plan to create opportunities for cross-organizational teams to meet over time to create a generative, inclusive, supportive space. This peer mentoring professional development program matched groups with level members from varied departments. This program is giving rise to highly generative interactions that have multiple benefits for the company and its culture, including a valued response to millennial employee requests for professional development.

### Peer Mentoring as a DEI Tool

Groups of 6 individuals were matched into a cohort peer mentoring group based on career level and diversity of background, job role and department. Each participant completed a strengths assessment with a coach. The results of the assessment were shared with the individual and they had the option to share the results with their managers as well (100%

of participants chose to share). The manager, coach and participant worked together in a single meeting to set development goals for the coming year.

The mentoring groups then participated in a mentoring best practices training and then were launched to meet regularly as a group for the coming year. Their directive was to support one another in reaching their professional developmental goals. Over time, as trust and relationships developed, the groups not only shared their goal progress but talked about other challenges at work.

Via assessments, we learned that satisfaction with the program was high and participants strongly agreed that it gave them a deeper relationship with their cohort members which extended to enhanced collaboration at work outside of the group.

Leaders and managers should aspire to create teams with common purpose that meet the need for increasing generative interactions among diverse teams that don't work closely. However, it's not always easy to determine how to do this with work needing to get done under time and resource pressure. This model has many benefits: it is sustainable with minimal time to launch, it is cost and time effective, and the model is scalable for large or small organizations.



Please contact us [info@diversitynorth.com](mailto:info@diversitynorth.com) if you'd like to talk more about the path to setting up a peer mentoring program at your organization.

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