

Top 10 Promising Practices on Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural and Linguistic Competence for Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) definition of Promising Practice.

Promising Practice: *A practice with an innovative approach that improves upon existing practice and positively impacts the area of practice. The practice should demonstrate a high degree of success and the possibility of replication in other agencies or settings but has not been tested.*

1. Staffing the DICLC Council Work.

- Dedicate all or part of a staff member's role to advancing the Council's cultural and linguistic competency and cultural diversity activities. The ability to do this is affected by the size of Council staff and budget based on each individual Council's resources. To ensure CLC is embedded, Councils can determine what would be a reasonable portion of a staff member's time to coordinate, monitor, and report on Council cultural diversity efforts.
- Other ways could include hiring a cultural liaison or community engagement staffer to lead overall Council efforts on DICLC, including its targeted disparity goals or objectives.

Tip: In some capacity, the practice of using culturally and linguistically competent strategies is the responsibility of the entire Council staff, members, and subrecipients.

2. Establish a Diversity Council Committee or Work Group.

Potential roles/responsibilities could include but are not limited to:

- Review and provide input on the Council's Five-Year State Plan.
- Serve an advisory role in overseeing the Council's grants and initiatives to ensure cultural competency throughout the grants process.
- Identify and advocate for the removal of barriers that prevent people from diverse populations from being included.
- Increase the diversity of Council membership by engaging unserved/underserved communities.
- Create and utilize a language access plan to increase diversity and inclusion in all aspects of Council work.

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- Establish and monitor a Council goal or measure to increase the diversity of the Council's membership. Track the measure internally and report to the full Council on its progress. Reassess this measure over time to determine if new or different recruitment strategies are needed. Diversifying Council membership is not a Five-Year State Plan goal or objective.

Tips: Consider assigning term limits to membership on diversity/cultural committees so members can rotate to keep the ideas and perspectives diverse and new.

3. Conduct an organizational self-assessment of the Council.

There are tools available for cultural diversity/cultural and linguistic competency organizational self-assessments. Councils can implement them as intended or collaborate with advocacy organizations and others to use them as a guide to develop their own assessments.

The assessment can include but is not limited to a review of your Councils':

- Mission/vision, policies, and practices.
- Employment practices.
- Grantee/in-house and contracts process.
- Professional development (for Council members and staff).
- Collaborations and partnerships with diverse communities.
- Culturally and linguistically competent communications with populations that speak a language other than English.

Tips: Review the assessment results on a regular basis to create a plan to improve work in a particular area. Adopt lessons learned from other organizations engaged in similar assessments.

4. Develop and implement a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan (DEI).

- The organizational self-assessment should prepare a Council to develop a DEI or similar cultural diversity action plan to address its efforts in DICLC.
- The plan should align with the principles of the DD Act, the Council's vision and mission and its commitment to implementing internal operations and state plan activities in a culturally and linguistically competent manner.
- Identify the Council's core functions: State Plan & Staff, Council, Self-Advocacy/Advocacy, Grants/Initiatives.
- Conduct a self-assessment asking stakeholders about DEI status in each core function area.
- Set concrete and achievable goals under each core function.

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- Incorporate DEI principles within your State Plan and activities and Annual Work Plans, i.e., *"The DD Council will include best practices for DEI in its self-determination training of individuals with DD and families."*
- Set up a process to track progress and update the full Council.

Tip: Review the plan on a regular basis to evaluate its usefulness and adapt its content as needed.

5. Developing and implementing a Language Access Plan (LAP).

- LAP's can be developed to support Title VI – Civil Rights Act of 1964 that ensures that people with limited English proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to Federally Assisted programs.
- To being the LAP process, DD Councils can use the LEP Four-Factor Analysis "Quick Guide" to assess its LAP needs. The analysis could include but is not limited to.
 - In-house and sub-grantee project/initiative work.
 - Dissemination of communications and vital documents.
 - Strategies for community engagement.
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TIP: Documents should be in plain language and free of jargon before being translated, as jargon is difficult to translate. When possible, translated materials should be reviewed by a native speaker for accuracy.

6. Engage Diverse Communities.

At a minimum, Councils should use focus groups, listening sessions, and community conversations with culturally diverse individuals with I/DD and families to develop the Comprehensive Review and Analysis (CRA) for the Five-Year State Plan. Do not limit this strategy to every five years; support similar opportunities throughout the State Plan cycle to inform advocacy activities, policy and systems change work, capacity building initiatives and to educate other state and community entities. Strategies for this practice can include but are not limited to:

- Actively taking part in organizations' meetings and forums that support diverse communities to identify barriers and develop solutions.
- Building relationships with different groups by attending their celebrations and cultural events and meeting with community, faith-based and other organization leaders.
- Collecting and maintaining demographic data about your State or Territory to inform staff, members, potential grantees, and policymakers.

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- Developing a process to offer small grants to meet the crucial needs identified by diverse community leaders, members, and organizations.
- If feasible, hiring or contracting with a cultural liaison that is a trusted member of the diverse communities the Council is working to impact. The liaison can help lead targeted disparity and other Council work related to DICLC.

Tip: When possible, share opportunities with Council staff and members to take advantage of low cost to no cost virtual events to learn more about the different cultures in your states and territories.

7. Support Diversity in Self-advocacy (SA) Groups and Council Advocacy Activities.

In the area of advocacy/self-advocacy, it is important to support organizations to incorporate DICLC into their policies and practices as well. This will ensure that people of all backgrounds have opportunities to receive education, training and be a part of systems change efforts in their States and Territories.

Strategies to support this work include but are not limited to:

- Funding/providing logistical support for the statewide SA organization to conduct a CLC self-assessment and develop their own Diversity Strategic Plan. The plan could include a goal for meaningfully engaging advocates that represent multiple intersects of culture and disability.
- Providing strategies to SA organizations on engaging unserved/underserved culturally diverse communities, civil rights organizations, and faith-based communities to expand upon their partners and stakeholders.
- Sharing recruitment strategies to diversify participants in programs such as Partners in Policymaking™ (PIP) and other self-determination and leadership training opportunities.

Tip: Community-based organizations are often staffed by people who share the cultural and linguistic background of the people they serve. Foster partnerships between these organizations and advocates to increase their capacity to strengthen the self-determination and leadership skills of diverse individuals with I/DD and families.

8. Establish Grants/Contracts/In-house projects that incorporate DICLC.

- Engage diverse groups to identify what the Council in your State or Territory could fund or provide support for in the community.
- Utilize a diversity workgroup to oversee the Request for Proposal (RFP) process or in-house initiatives to ensure cultural and linguistic needs are met when conducting State Plan activities.

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- Include language that encourages and supports diverse applicants to apply, clearly state the Council's principles and expectations for CLC and require projects to address those principles in their proposal.
- Request grantees or partners to include a plan on how they will recruit, involve and/or engage people with I/DD and families from diverse backgrounds to participate in activities funded by the Council. For State Plan activities that are conducted in-house, Council staff should develop similar plans through their internal process.
- If managing in-house projects or policy work, ensure that Council staff develop a CLC plan for the implementation, monitoring and evaluating of State Plan activities (i.e., self-advocacy, policy and systems change, work around specific areas of emphasis work and capacity building).
- Establish DICLC questions and grading criteria to assess proposals. When grading proposals from potential grantees, include a system that awards points to applicants that include cultural and linguistic philosophies and methods.
- Share the Council's funding opportunities/announcements in the language(s) most frequently spoken in your State or Territory. Provide technical assistance to support diverse groups to complete the application. Translate materials and/or offer interpreters as needed.

Tip: Include DICLC at every step of this process, from proposal development to creating technical assistance documents, to project implementation to monitoring and evaluation (i.e., surveys and reporting) to sustainability.

9. Use the diversity of the Council Members and Staff as a Resource

When applicable, use the diverse community connections of Council members and staff to engage cultural groups that are representative of your State or Territory.

- Conduct an assessment to identify the number of languages spoken by Council members and staff and any other cultural diversity aspects of importance.
 - Create a form for Council members and staff to document their connections to diverse groups, memberships, faith-based organizations etc. The form could be optional and filed along with conflict-of-interest documentation. Be sure to update the form on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- During State Plan development and throughout the State Plan cycle, members may be able to share public input surveys with their diverse contacts to inform the Council about emerging needs.
- Encourage members to share their unique perspectives and lived experiences with service systems to identify potential gaps in services and supports.

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- Find ways to incorporate the topic of culture in all Council meetings. (*Share events and opportunities to learn more about different cultures and the intersects of cultural aspects and disability, such as LGBTQ+ communities and gather information on needs and gaps in services etc.*).

Tip: Exploring and celebrating the diversity of Council members and staff can be incorporated during a retreat, teambuilding activity, or meeting by providing opportunities to get to know one another. Think about other ways to incorporate diverse perspectives of Council members to oversee, inform, and contribute to the work of the Council.

10. National Policy and Assurances

DICLC is also a matter of compliance. All Councils should acknowledge the Findings, Purposes and Policy section of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 and its Assurances ([DD Act](#)).

Section 101, C. (4) services, supports, and other assistance should be provided in a manner that demonstrates respect for individual dignity, personal preferences, and cultural differences.

Section 101, C. (5) specific efforts must be made to ensure that individuals

with developmental disabilities from racial and ethnic minority

backgrounds and their families enjoy increased and meaningful opportunities to access and use community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance available to other individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Section (5) Assurances (I) MINORITY PARTICIPATION—The plan shall provide assurances that the State has taken affirmative steps to assure that participation in programs funded under this subtitle is geographically representative of the State and reflects the diversity of the State with respect to race and ethnicity.

- Assess how your Council is complying with, tracking, and evaluating these requirements of the DD Act.

Tip: REMEMBER: Councils should report on these items as part of the cultural diversity section of the Program Performance Report. Each year, Councils show how work in these areas is progressing through reporting on its overall efforts to conduct State plan supported activities in a manner that is culturally and linguistically competent.

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