The Mission of the Intercultural Competency Initiative

is to work with employees to create an organization where we acknowledge the existence of cultures within each individual, we accept that culture influences how each of us views the world, and we learn skills to mutually adapt in order to more effectively serve the public and meet our work goals. It is also our mission to serve as a resource to build intercultural skills in the larger community.

Indra’s Net is a Buddhist “metaphor for a world of connectedness, of interacting, interdependent entities…”

- Mary E. Clark

The phrase “intercultural competence” means the ability to interact with, learn from, and value others, mindful of differences, and to understand one’s own motivations, beliefs, and personal makeup.
Overview of the Intercultural Competency Initiative

Sustainable Dubuque is a viable, livable, and equitable community that embraces economic prosperity, environmental integrity and social and cultural vibrancy to create a sustainable legacy for generations to come. The City’s Intercultural Competence Initiative is integral to this effort. Growing, thriving communities and organizations are filled with diverse and productive citizens and employees and are operated under conditions that allow people to reach their potential. Living and working successfully together across diverse backgrounds, however, is not an inherent human behavior. It takes intentional effort to build the skills and confidence to interact effectively with people whose backgrounds are significantly different than our own. The City’s Intercultural Competency Initiative focuses on learned, adaptive changes that allow us to reap the benefits of diversity while simultaneously maintaining a strong sense of community and interconnectedness.

As public servants, we seek to ensure that our staff is reflective of the community we serve, and that we have the skills to effectively serve a diverse public. We also recognize that an engaged citizenry is critical to effective governing and that social inclusion is fundamental to a strong sense of community. The Intercultural Competency Initiative focuses on three areas: 1) developing individual skills and behaviors; 2) developing inclusive leadership skills and practices; and 3) creating inclusive organizational values and policies.

In 2006, One Ummah Consulting performed the initial assessment of our organization using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and input from employee and community member focus groups. We created an Intercultural Team to direct the implementation of recommendations set forth by One Ummah in 2006, and created a strategic plan. This 2011 report maps the progress we have made towards the recommendations and strategic plan items over the past five years. The bulk of our progress over the past five years has occurred in the following areas: 1) obtaining strong executive commitment to the initiative; 2) beginning to build relevant skills; and 3) creating the necessary internal infrastructure to support ongoing learning and strategic efforts.

Our ability to succeed in this work will have a very real impact on the future of our community. If we hope to sustain our present growth, we need to be able to adapt to the changes that growth brings. Ultimately, how people feel they are received in this community, whether as neighbors, employees, or visitors, has an impact on whether or not they choose to remain or return. And whether or not our workforce and tourists choose to remain or return has a huge impact on our continued economic growth and vitality as a community. In short, our work around intercultural competence touches everything we do as a City government because it is about how we deliver each of our specific services to the public. It is also about our role as a partner in the growth and success of the greater community.

-City Manager Michael C. Van Milligen
Recruiting and retaining a diverse and talented workforce is critical to the economic development of any community. Our employers operate in a highly competitive market where they must aggressively compete on both a local and national level to find the talent their business needs to be successful.

Creating an inclusive work environment and arming current and potential employees with the tools they need to understand and embrace cultural differences will naturally help open the door to those considering the Greater Dubuque Area as a place to live and work.

Together we must distinguish the Greater Dubuque area from other regions competing aggressively to recruit talent and future graduates. Encouraging and nurturing a workforce filled with cultural diversity will shape the workforce of our future.

Why Intercultural Competence?

The City’s efforts are designed around the understanding that effective intercultural skills are learned behaviors that are necessary in any growing, thriving community today. We are striving to help our employees acknowledge, accept, and adapt to differences amongst people.

- **Acknowledge:** Employees understand that each of us has a culture and experiences that affect the way we see and understand the world.

- **Accept:** Employees recognize that other people have different cultures and experiences that cause them to see and understand the world differently.

- **Adapt:** Employees are developing skills that allow them to adapt to these differences so that we do a better job understanding one another, serving the public, and creating a unified community where all people can experience the great things that make us proud to live in Dubuque.

One Ummah Consulting, an organizational consulting group which focuses on multicultural competence and work team effectiveness, was hired to work with the City for the first three years of the intercultural competency initiative.

Nehrwr Abdul-Wahid is the Lead Consultant with One Ummah, and has provided extensive support to City staff as they have developed their strategic plan. His philosophy of authentic community building has led to national recognition of some of the programs and students he worked with as Training Coordinator of the University of Minnesota’s Diversity Institute.

"It’s not a matter of changing myself, necessarily, but it’s a matter of realizing that someone else holds their cultural values as tightly as I hold mine. Realizing this frees me to a certain extent and I can interface with the public in a more effective manner. I now understand that the person “across the counter” may not come from the same culture as me and, as such, I can adapt how I communicate with that person so they get the help they need. In adapting, I’m not lessening myself, but rather acknowledging that I know there’s a difference and that I accept it. Using the tools covered in ICC training helps me to get my job done more effectively.”

-City staff person

Reaching out to a diverse and talented workforce is critical to the economic development of any community. Our employers operate in a highly competitive market where they must aggressively compete on both a local and national level to find the talent their business needs to be successful.

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-City staff person
**Structure:**
1. Position of Training and Workforce Development Coordinator created and filled
2. Enforcement work assigned to the City Attorney’s Office
3. Human Rights staff and resources allocated to:
   - coordinate skill building
   - build a sense of inclusion of differences
   - address systemic issues
   - serve as a community resource on intercultural issues
   - partner with community organizations to provide support for traditionally marginalized groups in the community

**Strategy:**
1. Expanded police recruitment strategies
2. Began addressing barriers to recruitment including:
   - creating transparent Post-Offer of Employment policy
   - Implementing on-line application process
   - Coaching managers on interviewing for intercultural skills

**Systems:**
1. Incentive program and professional development for intercultural trainers
2. Domestic partner benefits program created
3. Mandatory training built into department performance measures
4. Bi-lingual brochures and signage in City Hall
5. Multi-lingual language line training for staff
6. Updating interpreter/translator pool and policy

**Style:**
1. City Manager and City Council support for initiative
2. Administrative Policy stressing expectations implemented
3. Guiding Principles of Management Philosophy amended to include intercultural skill expectations

**Skills:**
1. Staff orientation includes 10.5 hours of foundational training in intercultural competence and intercultural conflict styles
2. Five hours of foundational training for Board and Commission members
3. Mini-trainings related to race, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, age, and poverty
4. Summer Institute on Intercultural Communication attendance for trainers
5. Intercultural Development Inventory Administration Certification for three staff
6. One-on-one coaching for 30 management staff

**Staff:**
1. Internship efforts expanded

**Superordinate Goals:**
1. Transparency of efforts through:
   - Diverse Dubuque web page
   - Annual reports
Employee Engagement

It is our view that employee involvement and support is critical to our process. Many individuals from the City staff and the community have helped to make this initiative successful. You’ll find more about them on this and the following page.

Steering Team

The Steering Committee consists of representatives from various City departments including the City Manager’s Office, Police, Personnel, and Human Rights. We will soon be including Fire, Airport, and Water department employees. The Steering Committee is responsible for creating the strategic plan and annual report, soliciting employee feedback to identify areas that need attention, and directing the City’s overall program.

Tips Team

The Tips Subcommittee publishes intercultural community building tips in the employee newsletter once a month and arranges for management team training tips every month. A selection of the tips can be found on the Diverse Dubuque website at www.cityofdubuque.org/diversedubuque.

Training Team

The Training Team is responsible for designing and implementing training programs for City staff on an ongoing basis. In addition, training team members provide training to Board and Commission members, area businesses and organizations, and the general public.

Media Team

The Diverse Dubuque website: www.cityofdubuque.org/diversedubuque was launched in February 2008. It keeps the community updated on the City’s Intercultural competency initiative, as well as a variety of cultural events happening in the community and resources that may be helpful to others.
Building Intercultural Skills and Teams in Organizations:
The City’s Intercultural Team is working with Capri College, Goodwill Industries, Hillcrest Family Services, and Riverview Center to build intercultural skills and facilitate strategic planning for the teams these organizations have designated to lead their internal diversity and inclusion initiatives. In addition, the team is offering sessions through the NICC Business Consortium.

Cultural Affinity Groups:
The City’s Intercultural Team facilitates conversations with local residents of various cultural groups in order to improve communication, engagement, and support within and between groups for a stronger, more unified community that respects diversity, while at the same time builds community connections. Each group decides the unique way in which it will contribute to the greater good of the community, from providing mentoring to providing input on offering services in more culturally competent ways. In addition, the City assisted with the building renovation and staffing for the Multicultural Family Center.

“I feel that having this continue is empowering to the group.”
—feedback from community member who attends an affinity group

“This really opened my eyes up to different cultures and perspectives on diversity.”
—feedback from participant in Speakers’ Bureau presentation

“One of the things that I took out of this whole thing is basically . . . there is a willingness in this community to have this conversation. I really thought it was going to be the police vs. the community, but the majority of the conversation and feedback were people willing to have the conversation and work toward the same goal.”
—feedback from community participant in the police-community dialogue on race

Speakers’ Bureau:
The Speakers’ Bureau consists of residents of various backgrounds who are willing to have open conversations about their experiences as a member of a cultural minority group living in Dubuque. The presentations are designed to put a human face on abstract discrimination issues by breaking down artificial barriers and facilitating dialogue.

Police-Community Dialogue on Race:
Beginning in 2009, the Police and Human Rights Departments, in collaboration with a group of African-American community members, instituted a police-community dialogue on race. The focus was on creating a safe space for African-American community members and police to have a conversation around communication and cultural norms that were negatively impacting their interactions with one another. These groups of officers and community members are now in the process of sharing their learning with others.
Community Partners

An important part of the intercultural competency initiative is expanding the dialogue regarding diversity beyond staff to the entire community. This would not be possible without our community partners.

It is our hope that as the program expands, businesses, schools, and other community organizations will participate and become more skilled at adapting to cultural differences in the community. The City of Dubuque has many community partners who are helping to promote an inclusive community! Below are a sampling of the multicultural events and groups with an active presence in our community.

**Multicultural Family Center** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in a public-private partnership with the City of Dubuque. The Center offers a variety of family and cultural programs to further their mission of empowering all families and community members of Dubuque to reach their potential and build unity out of diversity. [www.mfcdbq.org](http://www.mfcdbq.org)

**faces & voices** is a group of community volunteers who work to create a more inclusive, integrated and welcoming community by celebrating and learning about our connection to the global human experience. They are the proud sponsors of the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Tribute Days and collaborate with other organizations on diversity and cultural events in the community.

**Proudly Accessible Dubuque** is an initiative to provide accessibility to everyone. They work to promote awareness of accessibility issues and educate businesses on practical, cost-effective accessibility improvements. [www.proudlyaccessibledubuque.com](http://www.proudlyaccessibledubuque.com)

**Bi-Lingual Signage**  Bi-lingual education was one of the “Ten Big Ideas” of the Envision 2010 process sponsored by the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque and the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce. New on-street and bike trail signs, as well as signs located at points of interest and public facilities such as park restrooms, are in the process of being designed in both English and Spanish.

**Every Child, Every Promise**  Every Child, Every Promise is an initiative to improve the odds of Dubuque youth by providing every child with each of the Five Promises: Caring Adults, Safe Places, a Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Serve. [www.everychild-everypromise.org](http://www.everychild-everypromise.org)
The City of Dubuque welcomes comments and suggestions about your city government or news appearing in this report. Please contact:

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**Special Thanks To:**

Roy D. Buol, Mayor

**City of Dubuque Council Members**
Ric Jones, At-Large Representative
David Resnick, At-Large Representative
Kevin Lynch, First Ward Representative
Karla Braig, Second Ward Representative
Joyce Connors, Third Ward Representative
Lynn Sutton, Fourth Ward Representative

Barry Lindahl, City Attorney
Kevin Firnstahl, City Clerk
Michael C. Van Milligen, City Manager

**Steering Committee**
Kelly Larson, Human Rights
Molly Menster, Human Rights
Andre Lessears, Human Rights
Randy Peck, Personnel
Cindy Steinhauser, City Manager’s Office
Cori Burbach, City Manager’s Office
Mark Dalsing, Police

**Training Team**
Kelly Larson, Human Rights
Molly Menster, Human Rights
Andre Lessears, Human Rights
Randy Rick, Fire
Crenna Brumwell-Sahm, City Attorney’s Office
Nancy Knipper, Water & Resource Recovery
Tina Sio, McKesson
Dana Livingston, Loras College

**Website Subcommittee**
Nikki Breitsprecker, GIS
Wayne Dow, Fire
Jessica Kurt, City Manager’s Office
Craig Nowack, Cable TV

**Tips Subcommittee**
Kevin Firnstahl, City Clerk’s Office
Dennette Kellogg, Library
Nancy Knipper, Water & Resource Recovery
Erich Moeller, Cable TV

The many other individuals who have been involved in planning and implementing this strategy over the last five years!

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**Next Steps with City Staff**

**Continued staff skill building to include:**
- Mandatory foundational training
- Individual coaching
- Monthly newsletter tips
- Management team trainings
- Expansion of ICC team membership
- Mini-tips sessions

**Department-level systemic work to include:**
- Employee engagement in changes
- Diversity and inclusion goals and performance management
- Department-specific training pieces
- Review of policies, procedures, and norms
- Adoption of recruitment and retention strategies

**Next Steps with the Community**

**Broad-based community engagement to include:**
- Facilitating interactive dialogue
- Soliciting diverse resident input in programming
- Broadening the types and nature of programs offered
- Continuation of police-community dialogue on race
- Continuation of cultural affinity groups

*This work is a marathon, not a sprint.*
*We invite you to come along!*

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**The City of Dubuque**
Masterpiece on the Mississippi