

## **INTRODUCTION**

Overview and introduction about forming a National Diversity Database Initiative for the Communications Industry, Judith Cushman, [jcushman@jc-a.com](mailto:jcushman@jc-a.com), (425) 392-8660

### **A Call for Action**

There has been industry-wide support for the Black Lives Matter movement. There is also a sense that it is time to do more than talk about the need for change. Professional associations representing the communications industry have made efforts to continue conversations, encourage and award efforts to hire and retain employees from diverse backgrounds. This is all good news but, in my opinion, there needs to be a major initiative to make a significant and lasting change in the recruitment process. Here is a proposal about forming a new organization enabling candidates from diverse backgrounds to be identified and evaluated for opportunities throughout the United States.

I have written a detailed proposal calling for creating a National Diversity Database Initiative (the NDDI). It is a simple concept: Create a national database for candidates who self-identify as Diverse within a broad framework. It will allow for flexibility about the definition, yet at the same time be searchable based upon relevant criteria. Core values will be mutual respect for both candidates and hiring organizations as well as guarantees of confidentiality. The database will be designed to protect the identity of both jobseekers and hiring organizations.

I will be posting details on LinkedIn about the proposal in the next several weeks once I have feedback from this initial outreach. Meanwhile, I begin with an outline that explains the concept and initial actions in sections I and II. In Section III, I describe the priorities for the NDDI, the formation of the organization and the committee structure. Meanwhile, here is the complete proposal for consideration and discussion among key leaders who have expressed support for DE&I Initiatives. This is my original proposal based upon an expertise gained from over 35+ years as a retained search consultant.

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### **About Sections I & II (1 & 2)**

This proposal is about creating a National Database of Diversity Candidates, named the National Diversity Database Initiative (NDDI). It would enable hiring organizations to fill vacancies by tapping a national network, initially of Junior to Corporate Senior Director level Diversity professionals. The Database is intended as a resource for hiring companies, organizations and recruiting firms.

### **The Problem**

This proposal addresses an ongoing problem about the lack of diversity in the PR profession. It is a widely held belief that there is a paucity of qualified candidates that accounts for the situation. However, many professionals in the DE&I community would disagree, at least at the junior to mid-levels. They would say it is a matter of looking in new directions.

By creating a national resource and proactively (and creatively) seeking out diversity candidates to participate in the candidate pool, it would have a major impact on the situation. At the very senior levels there is no dispute about the lack of qualified executives. Over the longer term, this Database would help address that issue, as well.

In addition, an on-going challenge for PR/Comms agencies is that hiring candidates for junior posts from diverse backgrounds requiring, 1-5 years of experience, can be a high risk, costly and frustrating exercise. It appears that the process of identifying and then retaining these highly desirable candidates, assuming they are successful in their jobs, is extremely costly and difficult. Access to a national, broader, candidate pool that includes junior level candidates with both traditional PR and non-traditional experience, would lessen the difficulty.

### **The Solution**

The proposal to create a National Diversity Database Initiative (NDDI) is comprehensive, challenging, and costly, but needed. There has been enough discussion and now it is time to act.

With the heightened awareness of the need for change, and the infrastructure in place through national organizations such as: the PRSA, The Page Society, the PR Institute, the DAA and social media, including LinkedIn, a project of this scope is possible.

Efforts to date have been piecemeal, helpful, and well intentioned. However, they do not have the potential to address a systemic industry-wide problem. This initiative has that potential.

### **Moving Forward**

To determine if the proposal offers a potential solution, it will be shared with organizations and supporters of DE&I initiatives. If it is adopted and implemented, the following are suggested actions.

- Create a committee of committed professionals to implement the ideas as outlined in the proposal, establish priorities and a comprehensive plan to meet the objectives of establishing a database.
  - Indicate a realistic timetable to complete the various elements of the plan. Develop a communications plan to inform key supporters of progress made toward goals.
  - Develop an organizational structure and staffing requirements that will determine the financial needs of the organization.
  - Create a financial plan indicating the funding requirements over a several year period and begin the outreach as soon as is appropriate.
  - Form a sub-committee charged with researching Diverse Communities and soliciting candidates to submit their material to the database.
  - Form a subcommittee charged with establishing an operational plan for the organization.
  - Once the Database is operational, a communications plan will be developed to update supporters, and those registered in the DB, of activities and plans. It may also include listings of job opportunities.
- Attached are detailed recommendations supporting the proposal.

**Outline of Sections I & II (I & 2) with detailed explanation to follow.**

## **SECTION I**

### The National Diversity Database Initiative (NDDI)

#### 1. THE STARTUP PHASE—Developing the Concept in greater detail and creating a plan to establish the services: The Capabilities Required

- 1.A. Actions
- 1.B. Confidentiality and Procedures
- 1.C. Access and the Resources
- 1.D. Building a Database

#### 2. EXPERTISE: Setting up the Database and Managing it on a Day-to-Day Basis

- 2.A. Design/Maintenance
- 2.B. Day to Day Managing of the Service
- 2.C. Solicitation of Resumes

#### 3. THE LEADERSHIP AND MARKETING FUNCTION OF THE DATABASE—The start-up role

## **SECTION II**

### Detailed Explanation of the Implementation Plan

#### 1. THE START-UP PHASE—Envisioning the process of establishing the Database and the more detailed procedures and issues to take into consideration.

- 1.A. Exploratory Referral
- 1.B. Job Description, Name of Organization Included
- 1.C. Job Description Name of Organization withheld

#### 2. SUPPORT TO CREATE THE ORGANIZATION -- including a preliminary list of sources to tap

#### 3. GROUND RULES and the OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

#### 4. ACKNOWLEDGING SUPPORT

#### 5. FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION (See Section III for detailed recommendations)

- 5.A. Winning CEO support / joining forces at Davos
- 5.B. Determining performance metrics
- 5.C. Staff Requirements
- 5.D. Could this model meet the needs of professions such as legal, accounting and/or other professional services?

#### 6. ABOUT THE AUTHOR, JUDITH CUSHMAN, and RELATIONSHIP TO THE NDDI

## SECTION I: DETAILS

### OVERVIEW/Description

**The National Diversity Database Initiative:** (NDDI) This Database will contain confidential resumes, biographies and introductory material from communication professionals that self-identify as coming from diverse backgrounds. The database, to be established for the most senior executives once this initiative has matured, would serve an exploratory/introductory function but not have provisions for the exchange of resumes. This is due to the highly confidential nature of the process and to encourage the most senior officers to participate without risk.

The NDDI would be a 501 (c)3 non-profit. A permanent name would be created as part of the initial formation of the organization. (For purposes here, it is called the **National Diversity Database Initiative**)

Companies seeking Diversity candidates would post their job openings as part of their routine procedures to source candidates. Assuming the NDDI would be a robust source of candidates, there would be no need to look in a variety of directions or make extraordinary efforts to generate qualified professionals from diverse backgrounds. Of course, that would not prevent sourcing from additional contacts/organizations. Hiring organizations contributing job postings to the NDDI would continue to post openings on their own sites and/or other locations.

The database would be funded by a mix of resources, including fees paid to access the Database by hiring organizations. For members/ supporters of the NDDI the fees would be lower than the fees for non-members. There would be NO fee for individuals to submit a resume or introductory material for inclusion in the Database.

Other sources could be donations by companies supporting this service which would be structured as a non-profit or as a subsidiary, for example, of the PRSA Foundation. There is also the possibility for grants. This is where the expertise of the founding organizations of the NDDI would be helpful. Should this concept generate discussions about forming an organization, a committee to explore funding options would be assembled very early in the planning stage.

This proposal will be reviewed by a leadership group of volunteers. If approved, a committee will immediately be formed to explore the structure needed to create an organization as I have proposed, and/or as it will evolve. To speed the process of building the Database, each organizational source of Diversity candidates would be contacted on an informational basis in the early stages of forming the NDDI. No resumes would be solicited initially but a dialog would be established paving the way for the relationship to deepen. Resumes will be solicited when the structure for the Database is in place and operational.

I would expect there would be a staff comprised of DB expert(s) to maintain and update the database. Also, there would be mid-level manager(s) to operate the service on a day-to-day basis maintaining contact with job seekers and clients posting jobs and/or searching the database. These managers and their ability to build relationships and work successfully with the client companies, and the professionals who have their material on file, will be the keys to success.

I would not see having the expertise of a VP as a full-time role, dealing with top level candidates and corporate supporters at the highest levels, until the organization were mature. Instead, a consultant at

the senior level under contract for a specific time commitment might be a solution. That decision about a full-time senior leader could be made later.

Here is an outline of the steps involved in creating and operating this service. There are three different areas of expertise required to establish the organization.

## **1. THE STARTUP PHASE – Developing the concept in greater detail and creating a plan to establish the service.**

EXPERTISE REQUIRED: Strategic leadership, organizational strength, commitment to DE&I Initiatives, ability to work with senior leadership, Start-up capability. The leadership capability will also be required in the second phase of development to continuously drive the growth of the Initiative through organizational/corporate support while at the same time, expanding the talent pool of Diverse candidates.

### **1.A. Actions**

- Outline the specific details about the mission and how the database will meet address those challenges.
- Obtain support for the concept and develop a financial plan. This will involve presentations and small group meetings with representatives from supporting organizations, as well as additional organizations in the communications/marketing profession.
- Create a clear mission/vision and definition of the scope of the term “Diversity” Also, determine who is eligible to be included in the Database and ask applicants to identify how they fit the definition so we may be assured the candidate is qualified based on the specifications.
- Develop an operating plan describing the guiding principles and key issues relating to how the referral service will provide value while maintaining the highest degree of confidentiality.
- Create material outlining the benefits of the service and the procedures that govern its use.
- Conduct preliminary research to identify resources and existing databases that could be consolidated and/or linked to form a national network. At the same time, learn what has been most successful for those organizations, including the PRSA Job Bank, to help shape the planning for this project. Could there be a cooperative agreement with the PRSA?

### **1.B. Confidentiality and Procedures**

Will all resumes be renamed and coded so the individual will be protected? Will all potential employers also be renamed to protect from future solicitation and other concerns? How much of a screening effort will be made by having paid staff to review the referral process to keep the process as error free as possible?

Due to the extremely sensitive nature of SVP, EVP, CCO, Head of Comms searches, I recommend limiting the Database, at least initially, to screening for introductory information. Candidates and organizations would be included in the database and noted for exploratory conversations only.

Executives would provide information about what types of meetings, interviews, and what subject areas they would like to discuss in addition to their official published bio. These referrals would be handled with the assistance of the head of this Referral Service in confidence, most likely with search firms who are under contract to fill executive roles.

How much personal interaction will be needed to prevent potential breaches of confidentiality? For example, how will referrals avoid mistakes where an employer might become aware an employee is job hunting? How will a referral be made to avoid sharing a resume where the candidate has worked for the organization in the past?

### **1.C. Access the Resources in the Database**

The Database would also be a source of candidates for search firms as well as organizations filling in-house staff jobs. Open positions would either be listed for sharing via postings (with no intermediary) and/or be submitted for a staff member with DB expertise to review and refer potential candidates. Here are considerations.

- Determine how the search functions will work so that the information is retrievable, based upon actual client/market needs. Here is where the PRSA Job Bank expertise would be helpful.
- Develop a notation system so that all contact and results are retrievable.
- Determine if there is any special content requirement since this is a specialized referral service. This could necessitate adjusting the application of the candidate e.g., any information in their experience that is not traditionally in a resume, but which is relevant e.g., international travel, special life experience, etc.
- Establish a review process, e.g., ask that candidates annually update their content and commit to maintaining long-term contact.
- For candidates that are new to this process, develop a tutorial (on-line and in-person) for assisting them to apply to be included in the Database. This is particularly appropriate for students from different cultures who have minimal job-hunting experience.
- Establish minimum criteria for candidates to be included in the Database, e.g., completed course work in communications, or has completed internships, or a degree in comms or at least 1 year of work in a professional communications role, etc.
- Include a requirement that the applicants describe the position they are seeking (this is very broad, of course) Also, ask if they are open to relocating either to another city in the US (and which ones) or to a named location outside of the US. Also, list any language skills.

### **1.D. Building a Database**

The resources to be tapped would first involve professional societies with diverse members in communications and marketing. Of course, PRSA and related organizations would be contacted. At the same time, leaders in professional communications roles, would be asked to submit job descriptions for open posts. There would be an easy access posting service with clear job requirements spelled out.

Additional DB resources would be educational institutions, alumnae associations, and ethnic organizations. Others would be marketing and communications agencies that have already established reputations for an expertise in ethnic markets. Of course, announcements about the formation of this resource would encourage candidates to apply. It is expected that the candidate would submit a brief description about his/her background and a guideline about what he/she is thinking her career goals are. (One concept to explore is the use of LinkedIn Profiles here.)

Funding for this Database DE&I Initiative may initially be through donations. PRSA may be able to provide database expertise for a limited cost. There may be a fee established for an organization to access the database. If a candidate is hired through the database, then the hiring organization may pay an additional fee. There will be no charge for candidates to register and be included in the database. Separately, there may be funds for DE&I projects that are available through foundations and trusts.

## **2. EXPERTISE: Setting up the Database and Managing it on a Day-to-Day Basis**

**2.A. Design/Maintenance:** Given the experience of PRSA with a national jobs database, I would expect there is expertise to efficiently create a Database that would allow for the special requirements as outlined in the proposal. I would expect the costs for creating and testing the Database would be budgeted and a special allowance be reserved for this offshoot of the Database already in operation. There is also the option to collaborate with LinkedIn to determine if their structure and search capability fit our needs and supported their efforts to build their networks. The key is the need for confidentiality and how to ensure that principle does not conflict with their efforts to increase sharing of contacts and networking. Even without the collaboration of LinkedIn there is the possibility of individual LinkedIn profiles being used for this Database (see below.)

A committee would be formed to create the specifications that would determine how to establish an efficient data entry/retrieval system and if that would require a candidate to submit a resume and fill out a brief application. The search function would be critical as well to allow for a quick review of candidates approximately with the desired credentials.

Since most professionals have a LinkedIn profile, a solution could be found to accept that data and then add what is needed to complete NDDI requirements. That would make the process of adding a record to the database much easier. There will be an ongoing need for data entry and updates to the files about candidates' work histories and any activity relating to referrals of candidates via the DB. That, I would anticipate, will require additional staff.

**2.B. Day to Day Managing of the service, the execution of the search function and approval to share candidate resumes.** This function could be a mid-level responsibility. Depending upon the need for processing (numbering few to many) requests for candidates to fill openings, would determine how much involvement in contact with both the hiring organization and the potential candidate could occur. In fact, one (or more) of the candidates in our database might be interested in this role.

**2.C. Solicitation of resumes and outreach to Diverse populations to build a database.** Once the concept is approved an immediate series of actions would occur to reach out to networks and affinity groups to develop a candidate/talent pool. Developing liaisons with DE&I groups would begin as an early priority. Solicitation of resumes would follow as the Database became operational. See Addendum SECTION II outlining the suggested steps involved in the process. The Addendum provides an approach that is a starting point about how to implement the concept. It is subject to revision and modification.

### **3. THE LEADERSHIP AND MARKETING Function of the DATABASE**

This is the most demanding function and requires strategic and high-level relationship building capabilities to ensure all components can be brought together into a viable service. This is a new concept with potential to expand in several directions both within communications and to additional functions, e.g., DE&I VPs and Human Resource leaders (for their input) as well as becoming a model for other professional fields, e.g., marketing, legal, and medical/bio.

It will take leadership, strategic and conceptual skills to achieve the potential for widespread adoption of this Initiative. I am assuming if there is interest in replicating this model/concept, there may be attractive consulting fees to charge that will help offset the cost of maintaining the NDDI.

The leadership role for the organization will involve networking and presentations to potential sponsors in corporations, universities, non-profits, government agencies, foundations, and private donors. It will mean staying in touch with thought leaders and being a source of expert advice about DE&I issues.

To remain relevant and flexible to changing needs, the managers of the Initiative (one level below the head of the organization) will establish a listening function to have first-person on-going dialogs with students, mid and senior level professionals in the database.

Depending upon resources and what needs may develop, a regular form of communication with supporters and candidates could be developed. There may be some stories to tell about excellent results from these efforts to connect people to better futures and for hiring organizations to learn to welcome different ethnic populations into the business environment.

## **SECTION II**

### **DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**1. The Start-up Phase:** Envisioning the process of establishing the Database and the more detailed Procedures and Issues to take into consideration.

For this project to succeed, companies and agencies who have pledged to support DE&I initiatives would also agree to support this project. That would mean posting job openings on the NDDI site and either identifying the company or agreeing to the confidential system created so their identity would not be known. There would be 3-options for an organization to select.

**1.A. Exploratory:** A general statement about the company would be posted with a brief statement about opportunities with the company inviting the candidate to forward a resume for consideration.

**1.B. A job description** with the name of the organization included.

**1.C. A job description** with the name of the organization omitted and instead given an NDDI identification code (This would require staff at the NDDI to make the adjustment and be responsible for preventing embarrassing situations such as an employee at the company applying for a listed job at his current employer. )



It is essential that any candidate applying for a job and forwarding a resume, will receive an acknowledgment. Also, there needs to be a system for a candidate to apply for a job without revealing his/her identity to a potential employer, much as the employer's identity can be protected.

If both parties were not identified, once they both reviewed the information and agreed to proceed, then their identify would be revealed. Again, this would require staff support. Initially, the level of candidates that would be solicited would be up to an Agency VP, a VP in a non-profit role and a Senior Director in a Corporate organization.

Special arrangements would be needed to include executives at the EVP, CCO, Head of Comms level and that would be tackled once the initial phase were established. (This level of candidate would require staff support and active participation in the process due to confidentiality issues)

## **2. Support to Create the Organization, including a preliminary list of sources to tap.**

A valuable resource would be the leaders of the DE&I PRSA initiatives as well as of supporters of the Diversity Action Alliance, among other resources. If there is sufficient interest to proceed with the project, this document would serve as an initial draft outline. As the organization would begin operations, no companies would be charged a fee to post job openings. Also, no fee will be charged to join the Initiative in its formative stage, however, donations would be welcome. Once operational, a fee structure would be established.

Once sufficient organizational support were confirmed, the outreach to identify sources of Diversity candidates, and ask for their participation, would begin. Of course, decisions will have been made about how the database will be developed. However, the actual outreach to potential candidates would be delayed until shortly before to execute a "Soft Start." That would be when there would be a functioning Database, a list of job opportunities and an explanation of the application process.

The NDDI would provide status reports to supporters/organizations (sources of diversity candidate) outlining progress toward building the Database. That would establish expectations about when interested members would apply to be included in the Database. Supporters would be asked to announce this Initiative once there were a realistic timetable for "going live."

### **Here is a list of potential organizations/resources for sourcing Junior to Mid- Senior Levels**

- Schools of Communications—undergrad and masters programs/ alumnae associations and faculty associated with these programs.
- Organizations supporting Diversity e.g., Black Asian, Hispanic, Native American, LGBTQ+,
- Museum of Public Relations, mailing lists for DE&I events
- DAA personal and organizational member lists
- Diversity Committees through PRSA and other professional comms groups, including marketing and advertising
- Multicultural News, other trade publications
- DE&I officers at VP levels in major corporations/organizations (Is there an association or a group on LinkedIn?)
- DE&I Officers at Colleges and Universities, e.g., Barnard College, Northwestern,
- Outreach to Agencies with ethnic business focus and their staffs to tap their networks

- LinkedIn use of Group Memberships both in Comms in DE&I to announce this Initiative
- LinkedIn to ask students and supporters of the concept to use their personal LinkedIn Accounts to announce this.
- Use of social media through our contacts in Comms to announce this to their friends
- Publicity in major comms publications, ethnic publications
- Local ethnic publications in major markets, e.g., Asia Week
- Schools that are known for Diverse populations (Howard University, for example)
- Tap community leaders of non-profit ethnic groups esp. their leadership or comms teams.
- Consider outreach to Public Affairs professionals who support minority relations for political leaders at state levels.

### **3. Ground Rules and Establishing the Operational Guidelines**

Here are suggestions (the Ground Rules) about what would be necessary to accomplish going “Live.”

--There would need to be a clear statement of the mission and services the Initiative provides. An individual would be listed to respond to questions who might be on staff or under contract to the NDDI.

--There would be an attractive number of job listings and clear instructions about how to apply. The confidentiality policy should be clearly stated along with an explanation of how the staff will communicate with candidates in a timely fashion and how candidates will be expected to respond.

--There would be an acknowledgment of the receipt of the applicant’s material at the Initiative. If there were any screening to be done by staff at the Initiative, there would be an explanation of the time involved before the hiring organization would receive the information.

--The hiring organization would also agree to a system of quickly acknowledging the resume and establishing a reasonable timeframe to either eliminate the candidate from consideration or indicate there would be further steps taken. All the actions taken on behalf of the candidates and clients should be recorded with brief notations in a confidential Database that should be easily searchable.

Since this is a Diversity focused Database, the information candidates would provide is expected to be more detailed and personal. This would be an example. “What do you identify as your Diverse Background?” The application would offer several suggestions as well as room for “Other” We would also want to know if the candidate were open to relocation and if yes, where?

Initially the outreach would be to a variety of organizations listed as potential sources of Diverse candidates. They would be asked if they would support the Initiative by sharing information about it with their members and/or their network. A goal would be to develop a dialog with these organizations as we solidify our plans and commit to a timetable for when we would go “Live.” We might also want these organizations to comment on our plans to tell us if they see the need for any adjustments.

### **4. Acknowledging Support**

As organizations join the Initiative, there will be a page to name them and include their logo. Periodically, news of the members joining, and their level support will be released to encourage additional organizations to join.

## 5. For Future Consideration: CEO Endorsements and Operational Issues (5A-5D)

**5.A. Winning support from CEOs and leaders for the Database Initiative.** This initiative has the potential to support Diversity Goals that leaders have established for their organizations. If this new resource becomes a valuable tool to meet those goals, then support from the highest levels of the organization should ensure support and viability of the Initiative. I would propose that a group of CCOs, DE&I Executives and HR Sr. VPs in each company consider forming a group attending the World Economic Forum and arrange to have an agenda item for CEOs to discuss and support this organization.

**5.B. What are the realistic budgetary needs** to staff this organization? 1 senior level leader (consultant or employee), 1 or 2 DB staffers, 1 mid-level manager to work with organizations and individuals, 1 administrative employee?

**What is the appropriate financial model for staffing** this Database Initiative? Is it filling a need that is critical and does that justify its existence?

**5.C. Staff Requirements-- Is there a need for a full-time senior executive to develop the potential of the Initiative** as a resource for SVPs, CCOs and Heads of Communication and that also markets the organization to key supporters? If this Database is a useful tool for CEOs to Identify Diversity Candidates for Board Level roles and the most senior roles, it would be easier to win support for funding the Database Initiative.

**How can performance metrics** be built in to measure the success (or not) of the NDDI and to determine the future direction of the Database Initiative?

**5.D. Could this model be useful beyond communications?** Is there a potential to **develop the Diversity Database Model that fits the needs of additional professional groups**—such as lawyers and accountants? Would that be a marketable application?

## 6. ABOUT JUDITH CUSHMAN ([www.jc-a.com](http://www.jc-a.com)), Qualifications, the NDDI and author of this proposal

The role would be voluntary while this proposal is under consideration. Should there be support to form the organization and a leader is needed, I would be retained as a consultant in that role to facilitate gathering the resources and executing the plans that are approved. The normal committee structure and reporting relationships would be established.

**Qualifications**--Supporter of DE&I Initiatives throughout my career as a Professional Retained Search Consultant. Values Statement on web site confirms that commitment.

--First search firm to be established on the West Coast, as part of Marshall Consultants, exclusively focused on PR/Comms assignments. Formed my own business in 1996. Track record : 100% success fulfilling terms of every contract awarded my firm for the past 20 years+.

--Member of PRSA for 35+ years; --Served on two PRSA panels during 2020 as a recruiting expert, discussing recruiting issues during the pandemic.

--Currently serving on the Program Committee for PRSA Puget Sound, won Volunteer of the Year Award 2020 for the quality and number of programs I organized and moderated. I am the only chapter member ever to be awarded this honor twice. I am also a member of both the of PRSA Puget Sound and Silicon Valley Chapters serving on the DE&I Committee for Silicon Valley on the Program and DE&I Committees for the Puget Sound Chapter.

--Extensive writer/blogger; Extremely effective at organizing large events. Pioneered the concept of Corporate Sponsorships when PRSA's National Conference was held in Seattle.  
-Graduate of Barnard College, Attended Boston University Comms School for a master's Program in PR.

**Establishing Priorities and the Committee Structure for the National Diversity Database Initiative (NDDI)** Prepared by Judith Cushman, [jcushman@jc-a.com](mailto:jcushman@jc-a.com), [www.jc-a.com](http://www.jc-a.com), Bellevue, WA, 425 392 8660 (Section III, 3)

**OUTLINE of Section III (3) To build the structure for National Diversity Database Initiative, here (below) is a proposal outlining the functions required.**

### **1. INITIALLY, TO BEGIN MOVING FORWARD, TWO VOLUNTEER ACTIONS NEED TO BE PURSUED**

- 1.A. Policy Setting—the strategic level
- 1.B. Founding/Initial Organizational Sponsors

### **2. DEFINING THE NATIONAL DIVERSITY DATABASE INITIATIVE: What it is; What it is Not; What are the Values? What are the Governance Considerations? How will it operate?**

- 2.A. Who We Are
- 2.B. The NDDI is an aggregating service not a recruiting organization
- 2.C. These are the values that will guide us.
- 2.D. How will the Database work? Here is an explanation about how the Database will yield candidates.
- 2.E. Governance, the organization shall have a Board of Directors responsible for oversight and guidance of the staff and operations.

### **3. DEFINING COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS TO BE ESTABLISHED**

- 3.A Naming Committee Chairs and Reporting Structure: What functions and in what order should these functions be addressed?
- 3.B .Drafting Committee—taking minutes, initial thoughts, statements, concerns and creating a coherent statement about the organization, the mission and structure.

#### **3.C. CREATING COMMITTEES WITH SPECIFIC AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY (3.C.1 - 3.C. 6)**

- 3.C.1. Establishing a committee about the structure of the organization to address how the NDDI will meet the needs of the hiring organizations/clients and job seekers (candidates). Attached to this committee should be a focus group of senior members.
- 3.C.2. Database Committee -- Initial Database Design, functionality and beyond This committee is critical to the success of the organization
- 3.C.3. Leadership Committee--Serving the needs of the most Senior Executives Initially the NDDI will not serve the needs of the most senior Diversity executives e.g., CCO, EVPs.
- 3.C.4. The Research Function, Focus Groups (3.C.4. A-D)

--3.C.4.A. Forming an Outreach/Research Committee to begin contacting organizations that can refer diversity candidates to the NDDI (Via the PRSA—chapter by chapter, the DAA and its member organizations and other organizations mentioned in the report.)

--3.C.4.B. Research: assembling a Focus group of database participants – What would they want included in the material they are sharing with us—in addition to a resume ?

3.C.4.B. Cont'd. Research: How would candidates feel about the information we would want to know? Are there any issues that are sensitive? Conversely, are there any details that would be desirable to include?

3.C.4.C. Research--Focus Group of Clients/Hiring Managers –initial members of the NDDI to provide feedback about search criteria and what information they would find most helpful.

3.C.5 THE FINANCE/BUGETARY FUNCTION (3.C.5 A-C)—See also 5. and 6.

3.C.5.A. Finance Committee would be formed to begin to develop the business model and

3.C.5.B. Create a revenue model to meet the financial needs of the organization

3.C.5.C. Once operational, what fees could be charged for organizations to access the DB?

3.C.6. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES/COMMITTEES (3.C.6. A-C)

3.C.6.A. Operations Committee would work closely with the finance committee,

3.C.6.B. Legal Counsel essential as the NDDI defines search criteria as well as Diversity.

3.C.6.C. Long Range planning—this will be a secondary function initially

#### **4. COMMUNICATIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS—INTERNAL/EXTERNAL (COMMUNICATIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS)**

4.A. Feedback to candidates (Jobseekers), sponsors, hiring organizations—The key to success is building relationships.

4.B. On-going research to monitor performance and service

#### **5. DATABASE COSTS --What would it cost to maintain and update candidate records?**

#### **6. STAFFING NEEDS and INTERNAL OPERATIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Staffing-- who will function as the senior leader of the NDDI? (See 6E) , other positions (6A-6D)**

6.A. Database Manager-- At a minimum, once there is a functioning Database, there would need to be a database manager on staff.

6.B. Mid-Level Manager--In addition to the technical aspects, there would be a mid-level manager

6.C. Project Manager--Due to the complexity of the Initiative, a Project Manager may be required.

6.D. Normal administrative functions.

6.E. A Senior Executive with leadership and strategic capability to maintain liaison with corporate, agency and recruiting clients along with a marketing flair to build support for the organization is needed as well—a builder.

## 7. OTHER INTERNAL OPERATIONS/INITIATIVES/FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (7A-7E)

- 7.A. Establishing In-House NDDI Communications Channels
- 7.B. Will there be major fundraising campaigns? What support is needed?
- 7.C. Other activities that will contribute to supporting the initiative
- 7.D. Evaluation and measurement of performance, based upon meeting established goals
- 7. E. Role of Consultant, Originator of Proposal.

Establishing Priorities and the Committee Structure for the National Diversity Database Initiative (NDDI)  
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To build the structure for National Diversity Database Initiative, here (below) is a detailed proposal of the functions required. These can then be prioritized to determine which committees to form. The order and timetable will be among the next steps considered in the planning process. There may be sufficient volunteer resources for many of these tasks to be completed pro bono.

### SECTION III (3) (Detailed Proposal)

#### 1. INITIALLY, TO BEGIN MOVING FORWARD-- Two volunteer actions need to be pursued.

**1.A. Policy Setting**—the strategic level-- Volunteers will be charged with establishing the founding principles and ground rules. Communications leaders will tackle this assignment within a limited time period. The objective will be to establish key policy and governance guidelines and the ethical foundation of the NDDI.

How will confidentiality be protected and what rules will establish that principle for both candidates and hiring organizations? Generating funding is essential. What are the charges for the use of the database (no charge to jobseekers) and for funding the NDDI? (donations/in-kind donations?) What operational guidelines can be established that will reinforce the principle of confidentiality?

**1.B. Founding/Initial Organizational Sponsors:** For a project of this scope, a major communications organization such as PRSA or a major company with resources and motivation to support this project need to be secured. There are staffing needs and database-building activities to be undertaken. Sponsors may be solicited once the organization is further along in its development. See further discussion below.

#### 2. DEFINING THE NATIONAL DIVERSITY DATABASE INITIATIVE: What it is; What it is Not; What are the Values? What are the Governance Considerations? How will it operate? (2A-2E)

**2.A. Who we Are:** The National Database Diversity Initiative (NDDI) is a proposed non-profit (501c(3) organization. Its goal is to provide hiring organizations in Communications with access nationwide to a talent pool of diversity candidates. These are professionals interested in advancing their careers who self-define themselves as diverse.

**2.B. The NDDI** is an aggregating service and not a recruiting organization. It exists to help hiring organizations take the first step in the process of finding a talent pool of potentially qualified

diversity candidates. It adds value by having an extensive research capability, in both traditional and non-traditional directions, to build and continuously refresh the database.

**2.C. These are the values that will guide us.**

Our Behaviors: We treat all the members of our community with respect and courtesy. We commit to respect and treat equitably the individuals who are sharing their biographies and participating in this Initiative. We pledge to communicate with our candidates in the database in a timely fashion. We will ask permission to share their biographical information. If they are under consideration for an opportunity, we will provide feedback whether they are of interest for further steps or no longer under consideration.

If the candidate were referred via an organization, we pledge to inform the organization of our potential interest in an individual referred through their auspices. To provide this information, the database will be designed to include information about the source of a referral, and trackable details about actions and outcomes. (This approach will build relationships with individuals and organizations that will provide on-going and valuable referrals.)

**2.D. How will the Database work?** Here is an explanation about how the Database will yield candidates. Position descriptions will be posted along with a brief outline of the basic qualifications required to be considered. Hiring organizations, in confidence, may search the Database to identify potentially qualified candidates to determine their interest. Candidates may also explore posted positions in confidence. Fees for the service are charged to the hiring organizations. No fees are charged candidates.

**2.E. Governance, The Board of Directors and Authority**

Governance: The organization shall have a Board of Directors responsible for oversight and guidance of the staff and operations. There shall be an audit function to annually track the use of funds and report back to the Board. The Board shall consist of members of the Founding Organizations and independent, outstanding leaders in DE&I roles. There shall be 7 Board members. The Board shall have the normal authority associated with a 501c(3) organization.

Authority: Based upon the organizational structure of the NDDI, authority of the Board will extend into the following areas (and other areas to be determined):

- to establish new committees and initiatives that align with its charter.
- to authorize, solicit and appropriate the use of funds based upon approval and funds donated by members. (Other authorities may be added.)
- A majority of the Board will be necessary for approval when making adjustments.

**3. DEFINING COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS TO BE ESTABLISHED**

**3.A Naming Committee Chairs and Reporting Structure:** What functions and in what order should these functions be addressed? Under the volunteer leadership, the following committees (see below) will be created with an overall committee chair responsible for reporting on activities to the head of the NDDI. (There should be agreement about how these committees will communicate their results and activities to the organization.)

These reports should be assembled and shared so that there is alignment throughout the process. This will enable the NDDI to become operational without delay. While these

committees are comprised of volunteers, a commitment needs to be made to meet goals and timetables. In some cases, a member of the organization may recommend a member of his/her staff to assist in our efforts. That is certainly an option that would be welcomed.

**3.B .Drafting Committee**—taking minutes, initial thoughts, statements, concerns and creating a coherent statement about the organization, the mission and structure.

### **3.C. CREATING COMMITTEES WITH SPECIFIC AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY (3.C.1.-3.C. 6.)**

3.C.1. Establishing a committee about the structure of the organization to address how the NDDI will meet the needs of the hiring organizations/clients and job seekers (candidates).

Attached to this committee should be a focus group of senior members who will discuss how the referral system should serve their needs.

Once the DB is operational, a group of jobseekers (with their resumes in the DB) will provide feedback from their perspective.

Also, for this database to be effective, members will need to commit to listing their job opportunities although it may be several months before that happens. (See additional discussion about Focus groups below.)

3.C.2. Database Committee--Initial Database Design, functionality and beyond This committee is critical to the success of the organization and I am hoping there is sufficient expertise available to define the functionality of the DB to meet our needs as we outline them.

It will require input from the individuals in our DB as well as the organizations who will be seeking candidates to fill positions. This will be an ongoing committee since there will be changes and efficiencies made as long as the organization is operational. (Can we enlist the help of the PRSA staff or LinkedIn, Sales Force, Microsoft, and Oracle for example?)

3.C.3. Leadership Committee--Serving the needs of the most Senior Executives Initially the NDDI will not serve the needs of the most senior Diversity executives e.g., CCO, EVPs. How this Database can be helpful longer term should be considered since there may be opportunities once a senior executive on staff can develop that model. There are major issues of confidentiality to consider.

3.C.4. The Research Function, Focus Groups (3.C.4. A-D)

3.C.4.A. Forming an Outreach/Research Committee to begin contacting organizations that can refer diversity candidates or where we can tap into sources of diversity candidates (see list in original proposal.) This research will be extensive and will take us into directions that have not yet been explored. We will need to have a wide-ranging group of volunteers. We will initially want to identify and begin conversations with these organizations/contacts but will not be ready to accept bios/resumes until we have a functioning Database. One helpful direction is to reach out to the DE&I Committees through the PRSA—chapter by chapter. Of course, DAA member organizations will be asked to participate.

3.C.4.B. Research: assembling a Focus group of Users – Diversity candidates that will be in our database should be identified to ask for their help as we create the model for accepting their information into the database. What specific information would we want to know about them?



What would they want to include in the material they are sharing with us? How would they want to be contacted? What are their concerns about confidentiality?

How much feedback do they want? Do they want a channel to continue to provide feedback as they use the DB? There would be a commitment, in any case, to provide feedback to the candidates who gave permission to release their resumes. It would indicate if they are, or are not, under further consideration. There would also be a commitment to inform the NDDI staff so the record of activity with a particular individual/hiring organization will be kept. (We will be looking for ways to monitor the value of the Database.)

3.C.4.C. Research: assembling a group of Hiring Managers. These would be initial members of the NDDI. What is their feedback about the search criteria and how much would they want to know? They would want more detail than in a LinkedIn profile, for example, since this is a Diversity DB. It would be important to know about their ethnic background, languages, travel, life experiences that would help them succeed. (Are there legal issues to resolve here?) This would take into account the limits of the NDDI database and the staff available to help.

### 3.C.5 THE FINANCE/BUGETARY FUNCTION (3.C.5 A-D)

3.C.5.A. Finance Committee would be formed to begin to develop the business model. How costly could this project be to establish the organization? How much support could be given through PRSA and other organizations e.g., expertise in DB formation rather than having to hire consultants and start from scratch? Could this organization partner with LinkedIn, for example?

3.C.5.B. Creating a revenue model to meet the financial needs of the organization. How would the organization be staffed during the building phase when there is no revenue? What support could be found in the DAA? PRSA? and other corporate supporters?

3.C.5.C. Once operational, what fees could be charged for organizations to access the DB? Could there be a sliding scale, for example for 1 search, 10 searches (in a year) or unlimited searches for a year? Would founding supporters and members receive a lower fee than nonmembers? If this is a 501 (c)3 charity, could there be fund raising events or donations solicited? If it is decided that fundraising will be part of the model, then the head of the organization should have that expertise or at the least, access to that support.

### 3.C.6. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES/COMMITTEES (3.C.6 A-C)

3.C.6.A. Operations Committee would work closely with the finance committee to evaluate the staffing needs and the appropriate compensation levels along with the issues raised above re: location, DB costs, overhead, etc.

3.C.6.B. Legal Counsel will be essential as the NDDI organization defines search criteria as well as Diversity. Does that affect how searches are executed? I can see an issue, for example, if a search is for a Hispanic professional to work with Spanish speaking communities. We may only be able to say Spanish speaking because theoretically, Spanish language is necessary but being Hispanic is not. We do not want to create issues that can undermine our efforts. We must be clear about our criteria and within the bounds of the law.

3.C.6.C .Long Range planning—this will be a secondary function initially but once the organization stabilizes, this committee will be formed to evaluate questions relating to the growth of the Database and the need to update operations to take advantage of new technologies. The portability of the concept is another question. Can there be a similar database in other professional areas as medicine, accounting, legal? Can any of this work to establish this service be protected and monetized?

#### **4. COMMUNICATIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS—INTERNAL/EXTERNAL**

**4.A. Feedback to candidates (Jobseekers), sponsors, hiring organizations**—The key to success is building relationships with jobseekers that engender trust and ultimately referrals of additional candidates to the NDDI. That principle also applies as well as to hiring executives (organizational clients of the NDDI) and organizations with the resources to utilize and support the NDDI. That flow of communication requires a commitment to regular exchanges and feedback. The key to implementing that commitment is a database that tracks all the steps and interactions with job seekers and hiring organizations. Confidentiality would be guaranteed.

**4.B. On-going research** to monitor performance and service—in conjunction with the commitment to transparency and communication, there would be an ongoing effort to maintain a high level of service and to monitor performance based on the stated values of the NDDI.

**5. DATABASE COSTS --What would it cost to maintain and update candidate records in the DB** with all the details and the tracking information needed? There would, for example, be structural IT issues, on-going maintenance, and software updates to implement. Would this organization be housed in an existing organization, or would there be the cost of a physical location? How would confidentiality policies be established and whatever the decision, it would be shared with participants for their approval. See discussion about staffing for details about a need to hire a DB Manager.

#### **6. STAFFING NEEDS and INTERNAL OPERATIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staffing-- In addition to the Executive Director of the DAA who will function as the senior leader of the NDDI (see 6E) , these are the positions to consider filling. (6A-6E)

6.A. Database Manager-- At a minimum, once there is a functioning Database, there would need to be a database manager on staff. There will be ongoing efforts for adding candidates to the DB and regularly updating information. There will be posting of job descriptions as well as conducting profile searches to gather information for clients seeking candidates. Updates to the technology will happen frequently, etc. (See also the technical responsibilities that are described.)

6.B. Mid-Level Manager--In addition to the technical aspects, there would be a mid-level manager who serves as the client liaison so that an organization, for example, would discuss its needs and the job description with the manager. A file search could then be executed. No resume would be shared with the hiring organization until permission were obtained to do so. (See discussion in original proposal about confidentiality) A brief job description would be shared with the candidate to obtain permission to release the resume.

6.C. Project Manager--Due to the complexity of the Initiative, a Project Manager may be required.

6.D. Normal administrative functions such as financial, personnel, office communications, logistics will be assigned based upon the staffing model selected.

6.E. A Senior Executive with leadership and strategic capability to maintain liaison with corporate, agency and recruiting clients along with a marketing flair to build support for the organization is needed as well—a builder.

## **7. OTHER INTERNAL OPERATIONS/INITIATIVES/FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (7A-7E)**

7.A. Establishing In-House NDDI Communications Channels-- If there is agreement to form a variety of committees each with specific responsibilities and timelines for completion of assignments, I believe there should be agreement about an internal reporting structure. That will allow for transparency among our committees. We will all be aware of the progress being made and can contribute as opportunities arise. Here are a few thoughts.

7.B. Should there be major fundraising campaigns, that will require extensive planning and adjustment with support from the finance and operations committee.

7.C. Activities that will contribute to the support of the initiative will be considered as the organization matures, for example, national recruitment campaigns, spokesperson media programs and social media outreach.

7.D. Evaluation and measurement of performance based upon meeting established goals. Records and data will be collected indicating, for example, how many postings were listed/how many candidates chose to be included/how many jobs were filled/ how satisfied the candidates and client companies were with the process.

7. E. Role of Consultant, Originator of Proposal. This is a fulltime role in the initial stages to implement the program and build the infrastructure. At the next stage as the organization matures, a senior leader may be hired. She/he may then implement a program to support a goal of identifying senior level diversity candidates for leadership posts.

The consultant's role involves complex organizational liaison and the ability to marshal volunteer staffs as well as full time employees. There will be ongoing efforts to win CEO-level support from member and non-member companies. Presenting the success of this model at a major conference, e.g., Davos (World Economic Forum) will be a goal to increase adoption of this model beyond communications.