

National Advisory Committee

Spring 2023 Meeting

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

May 4, 2023

- Good morning, everyone. It's great to be in person, again, right? And a big hello to anyone who's joining virtually.
- Normally, I start these meetings with an update on U.S. Census Bureau matters. But today is different. I'll leave the updating in the capable hands of our wonderful Deputy Director Ron Jarmin. Thank you, Ron!
- Next, I'd like to welcome our incoming National Advisory Committee members:
 - **Germine Awad**, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor of Psychology, at the University of Michigan.
 - **Mark Hugo Lopez**, director of Race and Ethnicity Research, the Pew Research Center.
 - **Richard Pan**, pediatrician and former California Senator.
 - **Tracy Rouleau**, president and founder of TBD Economics, LLC.
 - **Marlene Sallo**, executive director, National Disability Rights Network.
 - **Nicholas Vargas**, incoming associate professor of Chicana/Latina Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies at University of California, Berkeley.
- This morning, I want to use the balance of my time to discuss a topic that is near and dear to me: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, or DEIA.
- In our last meeting, you requested a presentation on DEIA and, specifically, where we are in diversifying our workforce. We'll do that later this morning.
- Now, institutionalizing the principles of DEIA is both complex and challenging for any organization. When combining these principles with our core values of scientific integrity, objectivity, transparency, and independence, they will affect just about everything we do in our daily work activities.
- Our work in DEIA reflects our moral obligation to promote human decency and respect through equitable opportunity and accessibility for all staff. Such a perspective is an incredibly powerful motivator for how we operate as an institution. But there are some incredible added benefits that we also need to acknowledge.
- Infusing these principles with our core values leads us to better science, better systems, better policies, research designs, methods, and statistical data products. And that means higher quality and more relevant data on our nation's population and economy.
- Yes, the Census Bureau can more effectively realize our mission by integrating the principles of DEIA with our core values. We can better serve the American people.
- I know realize that DEIA can mean many things to many people. So, maybe it's important that you know what it means to me and why I'm passionate about it.

- To me, living DEIA is all about translating our core values into actions that advance professional growth for our staff as well as to promote new, creative insights. After all:
 - Who doesn't value respect for one another inside and outside the workplace?
 - Who doesn't value knowledge that's comes from diverse perspectives?
 - Who doesn't value receiving help and support from others, or helping others, even when there's no direct benefit to themselves?
 - And who doesn't value fairness, especially in career growth opportunities or hiring decisions?
- Honestly, everyone I know values these basic principles. And these are some of the fundamentals of living DEIA in the workplace.
- So, it's almost surprising that all organizations struggle to meet the spirit of DEIA. But it ends up being quite the challenge. Maybe it's because infusing DEIA in our workplace requires significant cultural change.
- Now, an old colleague once told me that directing a large, longstanding federal agency was like trying to steer an aircraft carrier with a canoe paddle. And you know what? They were correct...if one tries to lead alone.
- And as most folks know, that's not me. I immensely value both our Census Bureau leadership and the entirety of our career staff way too much to ever try to lead alone. I'm an enabler. I'm engaging in my own journey to plant the seeds of DEIA at all levels of our amazing staff. And I'm nurturing the seedlings that sprout.
- So, in my necessarily limited term as director...yes, I admit I'm trying to change our work culture. And I figure that while my single canoe paddle won't change the direction of our wonderful Census Bureau, maybe 13,000 paddles will do the trick.
- We'll see, although it'll take years to find out.
- But that brings me to providing some context on our DEIA presentation later this morning. You'll see metrics on our workforce. The results come from our Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion or EEODI. And afterwards, we'll talk about our work to provide data and tools that enable equity assessments in our communities.
- Now, let's all recognize that the Census Bureau has been working on enhancing the diversification of our workforce for years. In fact, the infrastructure we have in support of DEIA efforts may surprise you:
 - We have the EEODI office, headed by David Donovan, which reports on racial-ethnic composition of our workforce in compliance with federal regulations.
 - Our Diversity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Stephanie Watson ensures that a rich mix of training resources and activities are available to staff to learn and leverage the principles of DEIA.
 - Our Human Resources Department is led by Veronica LeGrande, whose office promotes the development of diverse pools of qualified candidates for our job openings.
 - We have a Diversity and Inclusion Council, led by our Chief of Program Performance David Ziaya, that organizes seminars and activities to bring the principles of DEIA to life in everyday practice.
 - The Census Bureau promotes numerous Affinity groups to create support networks for staff around shared interests or identities.
 - We're quite active in interagency and interdepartment working groups on data equity.
 - And we've developed a number of data tools to facilitate equity assessments and data for communities for economic development and needs assessments.
 - Just search on Data for Equity and our webpage should show up.

- And yet, these wonderful staff and offices involved in all these activities are not solely responsible for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the Census Bureau. Why?
- Because that responsibility lies within *each and every staff person* at the Census Bureau. Everyone has a role in DEIA. We all have to own it—from leadership, to our scientists and subject matter experts, to our technicians and administrators, and even our clerks and field representatives and so on. That is what cultural change is all about.
- We can check all the boxes we want as far as offering trainings, creating policies, reporting metrics, and so on. But the true spirit of DEIA is not about numbers and boxes or how many training classes you take. Yes, those are incredibly important, yet they don't get to the essence of DEIA.
- DEIA is about how we value each other and how we work with each other. And please understand...there is no dichotomy for DEIA status. Because embracing DEIA is about the journey. It's dynamic. Its progression can ebb and flow, and never static. It's all about making progress step, by step, by step.
- Diversity workplace metrics are incredibly important. But they reveal the outcome of past efforts. There's a lag. And in an organization like the Census Bureau where staff enjoy longevity because they value working here, the lag can be years.
- Moreover, I'll tell you, I've witnessed firsthand some organizations with highly diverse leadership and workforces that I'm sorry to say didn't operate in an environment that valued diversity, equity, and inclusion. And I've seen organizations whose metrics suggested that they could very much benefit from a more diverse workforce and leadership, but they recognized that, and they worked to embrace DEIA in their organization's daily work.
- So, yes, metrics are incredibly powerful and revealing of workplace diversity. But they can't fully reflect the current commitment to DEIA or the level of cultural change that is occurring. That's why it's important that all organizations—the Census Bureau included—continue their DEIA journeys in a deliberate, dedicated fashion.
- The job is never done and there's always, always lots of hard work ahead. The way I see it, we need to dig down below the layer of the DEIA infrastructure we've built. We operate through policy and practice, where practice represents the way we implement our policies. That means it's our practices that have an impact on DEIA culture change more than anything.
- Living our DEIA principles is the primary way we create equitable opportunities for all our staff. It's those everyday decisions like who gets a committee or workgroup assignment; who's appointed to a leadership role; who gets to go on a detail; who's assigned to be a player in the exciting new initiative; even who gets mentored.
- It's those types of opportunities that position staff well when it comes time for a promotion or when applying to a new position. It's the way we can equitably expand the eligibility pool when a new opportunity arises. We need to do all we can to diversify the qualified candidate pool. That means we need equity in the opportunities needed to get qualified.
- Now, it's imperative that as leaders, we do our part to infuse DEIA principles into the workplace. And if you recall the infrastructure I described earlier, leadership has been active in this area for years. It's quite notable.
- Now, I see my role as director—and indeed my responsibility—as that of catalyzing the infusion of DEIA principles into our everyday work at the Census Bureau. This is an area where I know I can help. And here are some of the ways I am helping:
- I'm vigorously supporting our transformation and modernization initiative.
- I'm doing this by communicating how embracing DEIA can accelerate innovation and creativity through diverse perspectives.

- I'm spearheading efforts to create continuous dialogue with external stakeholders and partners, with federal state and local officials, with tribal leaders across our nation, and the public more generally.
- I'm making every effort to connect directly with as many of our dedicated, wonderful staff at all levels.
- I meet as many as I can in person, I look them in the eye, show them we care, and encourage them to ask me anything.
- I share my life experiences with staff to demonstrate the value that DEIA offers for professional growth and scientific excellence.
- I'm part of an effort to engage universities and community colleges—including HBCUs and MISs—to inspire all students to consider careers at the Census Bureau and the federal statistical system.
- And I am using all my internal and external engagements to learn and then communicate that to Census Bureau leadership and staff.
- Most importantly, I am trying as best I can, to lead by example in a way that demonstrates the usage of DEIA principles.
- And I'm encouraging all Census Bureau leadership and staff to do the same.
- So, my bottom line this morning, is twofold: first, regardless of where an organization is in its never-ending DEIA journey, there's always more progress to be made.
- And second, the current state of an organization with regard to DEIA is necessarily in flux...that's why it's so important to bake these principles and our core values into our everyday practices and work activities.
- I'll close by acknowledging that like all organizations, the Census Bureau is a work in progress. Heck, *I'm* a work in progress and so is everyone listening today. We all are.
- I'm proud of the progress we've made while recognizing there's still so much more that needs to be done. We're committed to do all we can to promote DEIA in our workplace and in our statistical data products.
- I'm an optimistic soul. I look forward to the progress we'll be making in the coming years. We expect to share our experiences for others to benefit in the future.
- Thank you for listening, everyone.