

From: Redding, Russell
Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020
Subject: Project JUST Committee

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I announce the formation of the Department's Project JUST Committee. Project "JUST" stands for Justice, Unity, Solidarity, and Tolerance. This important diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative was inspired by Michele Brookins, Administrative Assistant for the Bureau of Market Development. Michele reached out to suggest we create a working group following my [blog post](#) in June, which called for racial equity and equality in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. At my request, Michele serves as the committee's first Chair.

The committee includes a diverse representation from all Bureaus. Our first actions were to create a mission, vision, values and goals for the Committee, which are outlined in this email and will be published on the intranet for all employees to access and review. Our shared vision is that we will strive to achieve equity, racial justice, and positive transformational change in the department and in the agricultural industry. The committee's mission is to achieve and maintain a working environment that addresses discrimination and endorses respect, professionalism, diversity, and inclusion and where there is equality of opportunity.

The members of the Project JUST committee are:

- Michele Brookins, Chair, Markets and Hardwoods Development Council
- Lisa Anderson, Animal Health
- Anita Ashe, Plant Industry
- Kelly Atchamou, Horse Racing
- Michael Aucoin, State Conservation Commission
- Yvonne Brown, Rides and Measures
- Felipe Bustamante, Vet Lab
- Eileen Forney, Human Resources
- Cade Holden, Horse Racing
- Judith Miller, Food Safety
- Marsha Miller, Dog Law
- April Orwig, Farmland Preservation
- Nicole McCrone, Executive Office
- Clara Roy-Brown, Administrative Services
- Nick Jennings, Food Assistance
- Eryn Spangler, Executive Office
- Chad Witmer, Plant Industry
- Steve Zerbe, Farm Show

I have charged a second committee within the Executive Office to receive input and feedback from the Project JUST committee that advances their mission, and to work with the Project JUST team on tactical steps for implementation of the recommendations.

As the Committee moves forward, it has developed and adopted a set of values to guide its work:

- Respect/Compassion - We show respect toward all people without regard to race, religion, or gender and treat each individual (everyone) with human dignity. We encourage respect, humanity, and integrity in our treatment of each other, and we care for the well-being and safety of others. We treat people with equality, dignity and respect. We exhibit respect by empathizing and fully considering the diverse needs of others. We respect the individual and believe that individuals who are treated with respect and given responsibility respond by giving their best. We give customers and fellow employees the respect and kindness they deserve. We hope to earn their trust and loyalty in return.
- Honesty/Truth - In all our dealings we will strive to be friendly and courteous, as well as fair and compassionate. We honor and impart principles of honesty, freedom, truth, and integrity.
- Integrity - We do what we say we will do. We exhibit integrity by always interacting with others ethically and honorably. We require complete honesty and integrity in everything we do. We make a commitment not to allow business situations in any form to undermine or weaken our standards for integrity in dealing with employees, customers, shareholders, or the communities we serve. We are committed to conducting business with the highest levels of integrity through honest interactions while maintaining the privacy of our associates and clients in all endeavors. We conduct ourselves with uncompromising integrity and honesty as individuals, as teams, and as a company.
- Understanding - Knowledge is another driving force in our work. By listening to our clients, we learn about their business - ensuring the solutions we provide always work in the business's best interest and produce a measurable return on investment.
- Acceptance - Willingness to recognize and embrace the differences in others without judgement.

The Committee's goals are:

1. Identify training opportunities and other available resources to advance awareness of the diversity of the workforce in the Agency.
2. Learn about different cultures.
3. Get to know, listen and learn from one another.
4. Create a work environment that is welcoming to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

I have asked Bureau Directors to engage you in conversations on these important topics and develop recommendations for the Project JUST committee to consider. I also encourage each of you to reach out to your bureau representative to share your ideas to make our agency a better workplace for all.

Thank you for the continued good work you are doing as public servants for the Department and the Commonwealth.

Regards,
Russell