

Chapter Name

Minnesota PRSA

Chapter Size

201–300

How does your Chapter define diversity, equity and inclusion?

The Minnesota Chapter is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment to all PR and communication professionals. We work with members to increase visibility of DEI standards, resources and best practices for the following dimensions of diversity at all levels of the organization – race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, culture, skills and mindset.

Does your Chapter include diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in your strategic plan?

Yes

Using the RPIE model, describe your Chapter's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and achievements during the past year. -- RESEARCH: What research did you conduct to identify opportunities to address or promote DEI by and within the Chapter?

For its work with the 2022 Midwest District Conference held September 2022 in Minneapolis, Minnesota PRSA conducted primary research by interviewing the 2022 Midwest District Chair, who is a Minnesota PRSA member, to identify best practices for District communications and lessons learned from the 2021 virtual District conference, which the Midwest District Chair had led. Minnesota PRSA also conducted secondary research by reviewing conference information from the PRSA Western District Conference, PRSA Southwest District Conference and other Minnesota member organizations. This research helped guide aspects of planning the 2022 Midwest District Conference. Specifically related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts, the research showed that DEI efforts were severely lacking in prior Midwest District Conferences and did not appear to be well-defined within other similar conferences. Following George Floyd's death, Minnesota was ground zero for renewed civil unrest and discussions of racial equality. Minnesota PRSA realized the significant need to address DEI throughout the Conference. Minnesota PRSA's executive leadership, which included the chapter's first D&I Officer (now DEI), had a goal to complete the highly respected Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). As part of the process, the chapter conducted secondary research to determine if the IDI was the best tool to expand the board's DEI knowledge. The research included outreach to Twin Cities-based boards and organizations that have utilized the IDI and the outcomes. We also researched qualified consultants from the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and broader communities who could lead the Minnesota PRSA Board through the IDI assessment.

PLANNING -- Goals: What did your Chapter seek to accomplish with your 2023–2024 DEI initiatives?

The goal for the 2022 Midwest District Conference was to instill a DEI lens throughout all conference planning and implementation, and to reinvigorate member engagement within Minnesota PRSA. The goal for the IDI was to expand DEI knowledge within the current Minnesota PRSA Board in order to broaden DEI understanding throughout the chapter.

PLANNING -- Who was/were the target audience(s)?

The target audience for the 2022 Midwest District Conference included members of the 12 PRSA Chapters comprising the Midwest District. Additional audiences included potential Conference sponsors as well as communication professionals in Minnesota who were not Minnesota PRSA members but may be interested in attending the conference. The target audience for the IDI is the 2023 Minnesota PRSA Board. Future work with this initiative will broaden to include new Board members, committee members and Chapter members.

PLANNING -- What were your measurable objectives?

The objectives for the Conference included: • Seek diversity of at least 25% of the Conference speakers. • Obtain 100 paid attendees, 150 total attendees and 10 student attendees. • Reinvigorate member engagement within Minnesota PRSA. • Achieve at least a 4.0 out of 5.0 rating via the post-conference attendee survey. • Secure net revenue of \$10,000 to support DEI initiatives within Minnesota PRSA. • Create a turnkey template for future Midwest District Conference planning. The objectives for the IDI included: • Administer the IDI to all 14 Minnesota PRSA Board members. • Continue intercultural competence education with monthly homework for Chapter Board members with small group discussions during monthly Board meetings to share cultural differences and commonalities. • Develop a plan to expand intercultural competence for future Board members, Chapter committees and Chapter members.

PLANNING -- Budget: What were the monetary, time and human capital investments?

The budget for the 2022 Midwest District Conference was \$60,000 overall. There was no budget for DEI initiatives within the Conference. The budget for the IDI was \$9,000 for the assessment and consultant to administer it.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the strategies and tactics used.

The strategies for the Conference were to: • Acknowledge the significant changes the world and communications have gone through since 2020 and the evolving dynamics of the communications industry. • Incorporate DEI throughout the Conference in such a way that it appeared seamless. • Make the planning and event fun and interesting to drive participation of volunteers, sponsors and registrations. The tactics for the Conference included: • Recruiting a Conference committee of 18 Minnesota PRSA members to serve on four sub-committees (DEI, Presentations, Hospitality, Communications). • Developing a theme “The Shake Up: Changing Times, Changing Comms” and regular email communication and social media posts not only for Minnesota PRSA members but for all Midwest District Chapters and members. • Creating a Call for Presentations and leveraging communications to encourage women and those in BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities to submit to be one of 18 Conference sessions. • Building a Conference website that would showcase the diversity of speakers, sponsors and attendees. • Creating “surprise and delight” moments including visits from SpongeBob Squarepants (courtesy of sponsor Mall of America), University of Minnesota mascot Goldy Gopher and a support dog from the Airport Commission for stress reduction during a break. The strategy for the IDI was to deepen conversations of intercultural competencies to broaden understanding for diversity, equity and inclusion, and how all Chapter Board members play a role in driving our ongoing DEI journey. The tactics for the IDI included: • Completion by each Chapter Board member of the online IDI assessment. • Two in-person trainings led by Dr. Ramon Pastrano to demonstrate the importance of intercultural competence and set the stage for further learning based on personal IDI scores. • One virtual training session personalized for each Board member and held individually to review personal IDI scores and begin discussions of how each Board member can begin to expand their intercultural competence. • Monthly homework for each

Board member assigned by the Chapter Diversity & Inclusion Officer (DIO). • Monthly discussions during each Board meeting following IDI training.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Summary: Explain your Chapter's DEI initiatives for July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.*

DEI initiatives for the 2022 Midwest District Conference began prior to July 2022 but ramped up from July 1 until the Conference on September 18-20 and included: • Creating a DEI sub-committee specifically to review Conference planning and provide DEI insights to incorporate. • Inviting students to attend at a reduced rate. • Leveraging our speakers in our communications (emails, newsletters, social media, video) to demonstrate the breadth of our speaker diversity. • Being very intentional with speaker selection to ensure diversity of age, gender, race, geographic region/state. We did not automatically select speakers because of their title or employer as had occurred in the past. • Opening the Conference with a land acknowledgment written by a Conference speaker who is a Mdewakanton Dakota from the Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska. • Providing a support dog for stress reduction during a break; particularly relevant for attendees who may be neurodivergent. • Including publications and giveaway items from BIPOC organization in our gift bag for attendees. • Working with a speaker who was hearing impaired on his specific presentation needs. • Encouraging attendees via communications to practice inclusion during the Conference by introducing themselves to at least one person each day and making new friends. • Ordering opening night reception treats from Cookie Cart, a Black-led nonprofit in Minneapolis. DEI initiatives for the IDI began with budget approval in December 2022, online assessments and training in March 2023 and continue monthly with homework and discussions: • Completion by each Chapter Board member of the online IDI assessment. • Two in-person trainings led by Dr. Ramon Pastrano to demonstrate the importance of intercultural competence and set the stage for further learning based on personal IDI scores. • One virtual training session personalized for each Board member and held individually to review personal IDI scores and begin discussions of how each Board member can begin to expand their intercultural competence. • Monthly homework for each Board member assigned by the Chapter Diversity & Inclusion Officer (DIO). • Monthly discussions during each Board meeting following IDI training.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the elements or components, the techniques used, and the strategies and tactics undertaken, how objectives were met, and how you addressed the audience(s) you targeted.

Techniques, strategies and tactics are described above. How the programs met objectives (results) is answered in the Evaluation section. For the Conference, email communications were targeted by audience group, including potential sponsors, Minnesota PRSA – all members, Midwest District Chapters, Minnesota PRSA – APRs, Fellows, and Past Presidents. Video featuring all of the keynote speakers was used to highlight diversity of speakers and appeal to potential attendees interested in hearing from a very diverse group. Social media posts were also targeted to appeal to the various target audiences. Minnesota PRSA worked with other local member organizations focused on communications to offer their members a reduced registration in exchange for promotion of the event to their members.

EVALUATION -- What were your results? Explain how the program met or exceeded its original measurement methods when available or appropriate. What worked? What was accomplished? What would you do differently?

Results for the Conference included: • Survey respondents rated the “overall conference” 4.7 and “planning & prep” 4.9 out of 5.0. • Most diverse Midwest District Conference, with two of the four keynotes featuring a speaker of color, three keynote sessions including women and at least one had a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Breakout sessions saw four all-female panels, a solo female speaker and an all-female/Black panel, a first for the District conference. • Exceeded the goal of 100 paid attendees with 111 total paid attendees, excluding comped registration for speakers and sponsors. Exceeded the goal of 150 attendees (paid, sponsors, speakers) with 182 total attendees. Exceeded goal of 10 student attendees with 35 student attendees. • Exceeded net revenue goal of \$10,000 with total of \$19,865 in net revenue for Minnesota PRSA. Revenue was initially slated to be used for the IDI training; however, a sponsor later provided the funds for the IDI. • All planning documents were packaged and provided to Midwest District leaders for future conference planning. The conference co-chairs met with the 2023 conference planners from the Iowa chapter to share additional insights. • Post-conference survey results included positive attendee comments, including, “I was incredibly impressed with the focus on diversity and inclusion – both in the speakers/topics but also with the organizers’ efforts to recognize inclusion in the emails beforehand, plus acknowledging the land we were meeting on.” • Member engagement increased, particularly among conference committee volunteers. Of the 11 previously unengaged members, one was selected for 2023-2024 chapter board service, two have expressed interest in future chapter board service, three were chosen as 2023 chairs of various committees, and four went on to serve on other committees. Most committee members reached out afterward to share how good they felt about getting involved, how they enjoyed giving back meaningfully, and how they looked forward to future opportunities. To improve our efforts in the future, we would include people’s preferred pronouns on their name tags and ask speakers to include their pronouns in their introductions. We would also combat pushback via our communications. One attendee commented that DEI showed up in every session regardless of its topic and felt the conference leaned too heavily on the diversity theme. Results for the IDI are in its early stages. An informal survey of Minnesota PRSA Board members found everyone noted the time for the assessment and training was valuable and worth their time. Board members also appreciate the monthly homework and small group discussions during Board meetings to keep the learning process fresh. Several Board members have noted that they have learned new insights about their fellow Board colleagues. At least one Board member has requested to become more involved locally and nationally with PRSA’s DEI initiatives.

EVALUATION -- How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives impacted attitudes, beliefs or behaviors?

Minnesota PRSA’s DEI initiatives prior to 2022 had a significant impact on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors making it easier for DEI initiatives related to the Conference and IDI to be approved by the Chapter Board and implemented by committees who understood the overall importance of DEI. The DEI initiatives for the Midwest District Conference led to an even greater understanding by the Minnesota PRSA Board that funding the IDI was not only the right thing to do but was integral for future planning by future Boards and committees. The Conference planning was noted by Midwest District leaders as being a superior tool for other District Chapters to use for planning future Conferences and instilling more robust DEI efforts. Minnesota PRSA and its DEI leaders have frequently been sought after for local, regional and national PRSA guidance related to DEI efforts. In fact, the Chapter’s first Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Marsha Pitts-Phillips, APR, currently serves as Co-Chair of the national PRSA DEI Committee.

EVALUATION -- How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives led the communications industry in your market?

To our knowledge, no other member organization in the communications industry in Minnesota has undertaken as many DEI initiatives as Minnesota PRSA. After Minnesota PRSA established its Diversity & Inclusion Officer and DEI initiatives, agency leaders in Minneapolis/St. Paul created the Twin Cities PR BIPOC Career Explorer externship program for BIPOC students interested in public relations and communications. Students participate in a program led by six leading Twin Cities PR agencies, which include several Chapter members who helped serve as mentors within the program.

EVALUATION -- How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives influenced membership?

DEI does not live with one person or even one committee. It must be baked into the fabric of our chapter, and the Midwest District Conference is a great example of that. Since last year's Conference, we have seen more intentional inclusivity in other Chapter events including the PR North event for students, our annual Classics awards event and our Career Coffees.

EVALUATION -- How has your Chapter established sound relationships with diverse publics and/or organizations to gain consensus or help PRSA advance diversity in the profession?

Relationships take time to develop. Minnesota PRSA has had the opportunity to leverage partnerships and build relationships with DEI experts across multiple sectors in the region that have greatly benefitted the Chapter. These relationships have led to stronger, more diverse and inclusive panels that have allowed the Chapter to offer a broader range of professional development topics. The Chapter's website is now more reflective of the diverse programming and Chapter leadership. The lineup for our next DEI Forum is a great example of the sound relationships the Chapter has built. When a previous speaker (managing editor of MinnPost) was unavailable to be our moderator, he suggested someone else that our president-elect knows, and she was able to secure that person. Our IDI facilitator (Dr. Pastrano) has agreed to be a panelist for a modest honorarium because of his commitment to our organization. Similarly, the Founding Director of the Racial Justice Initiative at the University of St. Thomas has also agreed to be a panelist because of the professional track record he has with our current DEI officer. Last but not least, a speaker from last year's Midwest District Conference has also agreed to be a panelist for this year's DEI Forum.

EVALUATION -- Next Steps: What are your future plans for DEI initiatives?

Minnesota PRSA plans to continue its yearly DEI Forum on October 3, 2023. This will mark the 4th DEI Forum (virtually or in-person) since its inception in 2019. The Chapter also plans to continue its IDI work within the Board and identify ways to broaden intercultural competence learning to Chapter committees and members.