

## Engagement & Connections WG

Attendees: 25

### Agenda:

- Round robin introductions and welcome
- Engagement Academy updates
  - Initially had ~40 states signed up, but went down to 20 due to political climate
  - Initially the academy looked at making agencies more relevant through inclusion
  - The MSCG grant that supported this follow up report and evaluation of this academy has been frozen due to the Presidential Executive Orders; most of the report is done; the committee will be working on polishing it up to make it presentable.
- Coffee Talks
  - Due to the Presidential EO, the funding for this project has also been frozen and future coffee talks have been suspended.
  - Our last coffee talk took place this week during the NA Conference
- We want to create a space for everyone to speak about what is happening within their states so this working group can work to help meet the current needs of this group and our agencies
  - Look to see opportunities together within this community
  - Brainstorm and share as allies and colleagues
  - Discussion (round robin): The group spent time discussing the situation and their feelings and experiences within this period of disruption. A few of items discussed included rooting engagement work within existing laws, proclamations, and policies (e.g. National Women's Month); bringing teams and agencies together in resilient ways, diversifying partnerships and customer bases to ensure the business of conservation is thriving and healthy, leadership providing support, direction and examples of inclusivity, and skills needed to build resilient agencies able to operate in shifting politics.
- During the AFWA Annual Meeting 2024, the sticky note exercise of what this groups wanted to see from this working group [review of what is still relevant]:
  1. Language translations of agency products and communications **YES**
  2. Funding/Partnership Opportunities for specific populations **YES**
  3. What digital apps help people navigate outdoors? Land/water access ex. **YES**
  4. In-person format: live coffee-talk with moderator [just did that this week; coffee talks are now on pause]

5. Agency Partnerships- what works? What's holding us back?
  6. While we are unable to record coffee talks, are there resources that can be passed along to colleagues? Main take-aways, BMPs, areas of emphasis etc.. (could be tied to the platform Chet Van Dellan highlighted for director-facing story telling)
  7. Engaging with legislature on anti-DEI concepts **NO. May replace with legal fluency.**
  8. High level conservation community leadership representing the value proposition of engaging broader audiences through the lens of the business of doing conservation (Judy Camuso?)
  9. High level conservation community leadership revisiting the foundational principles of why we do what we do in conservation.
  10. How do we navigate not being able to say "DEI"- the 4-letter words of DEI and how we code-switch successfully in today's political atmosphere. Why are titles of groups changing today? **YES- especially with grant writing; the guidance we will receive from OCI.**
  11. Effective retention practices for diverse staff
  12. Effective retention practices for diverse participants
  13. Preparing a safe, welcoming, and receptive organizational culture
  14. ~~Helpful staff trainings~~ **Strategies for finding alignment, 'politicking,' results-oriented.**
  15. Hot issue stakeholder conflict resolution
- Discussion: translations
    - Some states refuse to send out translated products without a review from a native speaker; often there are A LOT of errors in translation services. Working within dialects can be difficult.
      - We need to be resources to each other; relevant across the community.
  - Possibly look at skill building opportunities that we can lean in on since we are no longer able to do coffee talks.
  - Sometime effective policies that help the agency also aligns with DEI priorities...but sell it as something that helps the agency and the management of fish and wildlife. If things align...GREAT (side effect).
    - Skill of being savvy to find common ground to get the work done that aligns with the mission of the state agency.
    - The human connection piece is extremely important. We will manage wildlife **in the public trust.**

## Mini-Training/Skills Development: Partner MAPPING

### Diversifying Sources of Resilience: Community

- What is your zombie apocalypse team
  - Use intentional partnership development – focus on robust, dynamic relationships
- Outdoor recreation adoption model:
  - Recruitment (awareness > interest > trail) → Decision to continue → retention (cont. with support > cont. without support) → reactivation (lapse > reactivation)
    - Time to shore up your business practices and light the way to get things done and the next steps.
    - Relatable beyond R3; importance of customer engagement.
    - R3 goes beyond hunting/angling → used with customer engagement.
  - Comprehensive customer pathways → align everything to make the path clear; SOCIAL SUPPORT is extremely important to get people from one step to the next; partners are pivotal for your social support network → help create smooth pathways
  - Step 1: Data
    - Churn rate—this data can justify specific outreach efforts needed to slow or plug the leak and retain customers.
  - Step 2: Map your partners
  - Step 3: Identify your Gaps
  - Stakeholder mapping
    - Institutional trust
    - Institutional transactional
    - Individual trust
    - Individual transactional
    - No known connections
- When approaching partners to fill in the gaps; come prepared with specific with what is needed on the landscape and how they can help; come with specific asks with clear expectations.
  - Make sure you have the time to invest in intentional work before you approach new partners → readiness for commitment!
  - **Clear is Kind**
- AI can assist, but the personal connection is key for success