

Dane County Regional Airport – MSN Journey to Equity (2024)

ORGANIZATION: As a county department, Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA) recognizes and adheres to all county diversity programs, to include hiring practices, vendor contracts, and procurement guidelines, among others. When DCRA contracts with third parties, we incorporate the county's non-discrimination and civil rights compliance provisions. We also include the FAA's required Title VI provisions in solicitations and contracts, as well as Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise provisions, when appropriate.

The action items in this plan represent the steps we can take to increase awareness and promote diversity in our day-to-day life by being a good neighbor and community partner. The end result will hopefully create increased interest in aviation at an early age in order to provide growth and future diversity in all ranks of aviation.

COMMUNITY: Recognizing that our airport, like so many others, is located in a diverse neighborhood, the following plan takes into account some of the steps we can take to become a true community partner and neighbor. We need to invest in the current situation to support the growth and future of our community. The goal is direct involvement, and having a presence in local schools, businesses, Chamber of Commerce and other business and civic organizations, as well as neighborhood events and meetings when appropriate. From staff efforts to host, volunteer, create, attend, and sponsor community events, DCRA will be a familiar and accessible point from which anyone in the community can begin a career in aviation.

INDUSTRY: Historically, the aviation industry had been predominantly staffed by men transitioning from war/military service. Increasing diversity in the workforce, along with introducing youth to the opportunities available in aviation, is a recognized need and priority throughout the entire industry. We do not have access to the detailed demographics of our airline partners, tenants or the over 2 million passengers that travel through the Dane County Regional Airport annually. What we do know is that airlines, airports, other governmental agencies, industry associations, and aviation support companies have made industry diversity a priority throughout all facets of their business practices.

Here at DCRA, we recognize the need for diversity throughout the aviation industry beyond entry level positions. As other departments have discovered, the ability to have a diverse staff, at all levels of the organization, requires changing or growing the available talent pool. One way we can help achieve diversity in the aviation industry, beyond entry level positions, is to start the interest and education pipeline at an early age and be part of that process in our corner of the world. By getting involved and being present in our community, from schools to neighborhoods and beyond, the plan is to bring awareness and attention to the excitement, possibility and new heights that a position in the aviation industry can take future workforce generations.

ACTION 1 (Organization): Ensure all DCRA staff are informed and aware of implicit bias, along with the great value diversity brings to every part of our lives.

- Create our E&I team.
- Ensure Senior Leadership Team is engaged in E&I.
- Implement training opportunities via OEI, seek out additional options, incorporate message into our all-staff meetings.
- Consistently communicate, incorporate and display diversity in all forms and action, including employee bulletins, social media content, daily actions.
- Train how this knowledge translates into serving all people.
- Provide funding for increased outreach.

ACTION 2 (Community): Community collaboration and outreach programs. Be a good neighbor and get involved with our diverse community, specifically north side neighborhood programs.

- Be a patron of our neighboring businesses including staff volunteer opportunities.
- Join/collaborate with groups such as: Northside Planning Council, Workforce Development, Northside Business Assoc., Destination Madison, Black Chamber of Commerce, Boys & Girls Club, etcetera.
- Seek out multi-cultural organizations, i.e., Women, Hmong, Black, Latino, etcetera, to better understand communication barriers, needs and differences in culture.
- Provide funding for increased outreach.
- Sponsor or create events onsite or otherwise, including but not limited to participation in existing events to support the community, thereby positioning DCRA as an active, contributing member of our community.
- Host events or community meetings at the airport or on airport property.
- Organize tours for community groups, businesses, youth groups

ACTION 3 (Industry Pipeline): We can help be the fuel to create, increase and utilize internships to bring awareness to the field of aviation and aid in being a pipeline for the industry. The ability to diversify at all levels in any industry depends on having a robust, talented, diverse group of individuals. These actions reflect ways to fill the existing gap. Our current Airport Management Internship is a coveted and recognized program throughout the industry. While dozens of our previous Airport Management interns can be found in various roles throughout the country, in order to have a diverse future, we need to target individuals at a young age.

- Engage local schools of varying grades for aviation holidays (paper airplane, airplane mechanic day, Amelia Earhart Day) by providing supplies, while hosting contests and fun learning opportunities to include tours of the airport. The goal is to show future workforce generations the great opportunities available with a career in aviation.
- Expand our current internship program to include various positions and opportunities.
- Create opportunities for job shadowing for a variety of roles of varying lengths.
- Join forces and expand our role in local aviation programs, including but not limited to the: Willa Brown Flight Academy, Sun Prairie East High School, area college programs.
- Inquire on feasible partnerships with local programs, i.e., Wisconsin Aviation, SKILLS, Operation Fresh Start, area high school and college STEM programs.
- Promote and collaborate with airport tenants on overlapping programs and goals.
- Provide funding for increased outreach.