

# Business

## Growing Unity Inclusion Diversity & Equity (GUIDE)



A program of the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce

### **Introduction**

This proposal is to formally launch our Business “Growing Unity Inclusion Diversity & Equity” or GUIDE program to optimize Chamber advocacy, elevate and transition community conversations and to demonstrate the power of diversity in Stockton and San Joaquin County.

The Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), in both its values and practices, is committed to inclusion and excellence in the management of all diverse people irrespective of differences. This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the Chamber on the basis of economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or disability. The Chamber recognizes that diverse perspectives are critical and essential for responsible and representative decision-making. The Chamber believes inclusiveness is a fundamental principle of every organization that enhances its ability to respond more effectively to changing demographics and needs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [THE CHAMBER of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia \(PA\) DEI Initiative](#)

The Chamber affirms our commitment to reflecting the diversity of the Greater Stockton region and the members of the Chamber. The mission of the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce is to aggressively develop and promote an economically vibrant business community.<sup>2</sup>

## **Background**

The Chamber speaks for thousands of local business people. Since 1901, the Chamber has been the authoritative voice in all business matters throughout the Central Valley. Our 2020-2021 Board of Directors are active on community boards, Chamber committees and regional forums. The elected Board is currently comprised of roughly 81% (48 % Male and 33% Female) White with roughly 19% (5% Asian Male, 5% Asian Female, 5% Hispanic Female and 5% Black Male) ethnic members. A review of board applicants over the past five years, compared to the composition of the current Board, reflects similar statistics. These percentages do not include our non-elected Chamber partners. Current Chamber staff is diversified (25 % Asian, 17 % Black, 17% Hispanic and 41% White), and are dedicated business experts that have the experience, knowledge and influence necessary to help companies accomplish their goals.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the Chamber has developed several award winning programs, constructed upon necessity and ingenuity, which provide business enterprises with a plethora of outlets to be successful. Pioneering business outreach and personal development initiatives, a cornerstone of our Retention Expansion Directive (REDTeam), Green Team San Joaquin, FRESH and Leadership Stockton, form a solid foundation that compliments, collaborates, and is copiously in harmony with the Business GUIDE model. Furthermore, timely business webinars, workshops

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<sup>2</sup> [Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce \(CA\) Mission Statement](#)

<sup>3</sup> Analysis of 2020-2021 Board of Directors & Staff Make-up

and seminars are continually offered to members and are geared toward providing up-to-date training on financing, employment law, and other wide-ranging topical issues impacting the cost of doing business ([www.stocktonchamber.org](http://www.stocktonchamber.org) for more program information).

However, shifting demographics and societal norms are changing in this space, forcing an examination of our service & product delivery to the business community and to our members.

Although every company is unique, they all share one goal: they must succeed! To succeed, a company must get its name in front of potential customers, keep an eye on the bottom line and become involved in political and social issues which affect their business. Regretfully, some businesses may not recognize our transferal environment because of long-standing business practices or unwillingness to adapt and will likely find themselves less successful. Their hesitancy and unfounded rational jeopardizes a generation of potential consumers enjoying their products or services. Nevertheless, by means of building relationships, showcasing data and providing leadership, the Chamber will continue to help guide their city, county and state toward a more prosperous and unified future.<sup>4</sup>

The Chamber is uniquely positioned with its board, committees, staff and proactive agenda to embark on the Business GUIDE program and to navigate those businesses we represent to meaningful and considerable achievement. The Chamber is a catalyst for business growth, a convener of leaders and influencers, and a champion for stronger communities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [ACCE: DEI One Sheet](#)

<sup>5</sup> [W.A.C.E. How to become a 3C Chamber: Chamber Leadership Podcast](#)

## **Purpose and Need for the Business GUIDE**

The objective of the Business GUIDE is to support businesses in recognizing, adapting, and persevering in this boundless era of business opportunity, and to serve as an example for other organizations to follow. Acknowledging that the generational consumer base is more socially conscious than ever of cultural inclusion and equality priorities, businesses must recognize that this isn't their "Grandpa's business environment any longer" and embrace the transformation of our business community.<sup>6</sup>

Conceding that the Chamber has never had a formal initiative that embraced diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), nonetheless it has encompassed most of these values as a matter of good business practice in the course of commerce.

Notwithstanding our standard procedures, are we doing enough?<sup>7</sup> Are we optimizing this space in time? Are we proactively and purposely reaching out to our disadvantage communities (DACs) in Stockton and San Joaquin County and including those businesses on the road to prosperity? Are we proactively and purposely reaching out to Veteran, women-owned, minority-owned or LGBTQ+ businesses to offer Chamber or regional resources for their success? Do our Board/Committees reflect the makeup of our membership and the business community as a whole? Are we sharing best practices and encouraging our members to adopt policies like the Business GUIDE?

To fully examine all the approaching opportunities, including self-reflection, the establishment of a GUIDE committee would propel the Chamber's effort, both

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Terrell, American Recycling on DEI Programs 5-14-21

<sup>7</sup> [W.A.C.E. Webinar Series: Race & Equity-Is there a place for Chambers?](#)

internally and to its vast membership, to investigate answers to these and other questions.

The resolve of the Business GUIDE committee will be to inspire and build better lives and community. Every day, the pursuit of better should drive us.<sup>8</sup> If we're committed to diversity, equity and inclusion—and boldly believe in the power of what we can achieve together—we must have the courage to pursue it.

The Business GUIDE will help educate, lead and influence businesses on creating a diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces to enhance their competitive advantage. Through the transformation of our communal, implicit bias's and prioritizing our commitment to objectivity and fairness, the Business GUIDE will help companies not only improve inclusivity at their own organizations, but support and *guide* equitable opportunities that help all of San Joaquin County thrive.<sup>9</sup>

It is well known that “*Adversity does not build character, it reveals it.*” The adversity we have faced as a nation through the Coronavirus Pandemic has revealed the challenges that we still face around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). These challenges must be addressed if companies and organizations are to thrive in the future. CNN Business reports, “The millennial and Gen Z generations are the most diverse in history: only 56% of the 87 million millennials in the country are white, as compared to 72% of the 76 million members of the baby boomer generation (Yellin, 2020).” Indicating that DEI is no longer an afterthought or regulated to

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<sup>8</sup> [Ford Motor Company](#)

<sup>9</sup> [W.A.C.E. Webinar Series: Race & Equity-Is there a place for Chambers?](#)

second or third tier strategy but must be treated as a priority in company planning and implementation.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, younger demographics are changing the way businesses interact with consumers.

For audiences in the millennial demographic, it's crucial for businesses to demonstrate that they align on social issues. For these young consumers, 83% want companies to align with their values and 76% want CEOs to speak out on issues they care about. That's according to 5WPR's 2020 Consumer Culture Report.<sup>11</sup>

As an advocate of the regional business community, the Chamber recognizes that addressing the evolving demographic changes in our region is fundamental to the growth and sustainability of our members. Creating an inclusive and equitable environment that engages individuals reflective of the full spectrum of our region strengthens our organization and is paramount to the success of Stockton and San Joaquin County as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, and just as important, many grants and contracts, as well as sponsorships that the Chamber may apply for in the future, will be greatly enhanced by the addition of the Business GUIDE as one of its "guiding" principles.

### **Board of Directors Buy-in**

*Leadership must affirm that the GUIDE initiatives are a strategic priority.* The Chamber Board of Directors plays a critical role in creating an organization that prioritizes,

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<sup>10</sup> [ESI ECONSULT SOLUTIONS, INC 12-11-20 Why Your DEI Strategy can't Wait](#)

<sup>11</sup> [PR Daily-Countdown 12-28-20](#)

<sup>12</sup> [THE CHAMBER of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia \(PA\) DEI Statement](#)

supports, and invests in diversity, inclusion, and equity. Organizations like the Chamber are better able to do this work effectively and, with authenticity when they are led by board members that are intentionally diverse, inclusive, and focused on equity. Our Chamber board members are instrumental in the creation and implementation of the chamber's mission and initiatives and can be intentionally designed to empower and entrust a diverse representation of the business community with its most important decisions.<sup>13</sup>

### **Business GUIDE Committee**

The Business GUIDE Committee should be comprised of a diverse representation of the Chamber membership and community. Committee Chair's would be appointed by the Chamber president and Committee members would be appointed by the Chamber president with recommendations by the GUIDE Committee Chairs. Members of the Committee should include, but not be limited to, representatives from the African American, Hispanic and Asian-American Chambers of Commerce.

### **Business GUIDE Pre-Launch Strategy**

Before commencing with the formal launch, appropriate due diligence needs to be performed to identify community organizations and individuals to participate on the Committee. As part of that due diligence, an inventory of existing or developing DEI programs in the region would be advantageous to the process, not only to learn the level of community engagement that is required, rather to gauge the pulse of the business community's attitude toward the GUIDE principles as the Chamber embarks on this journey and prepares to lead in this space.

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<sup>13</sup> [Board Source](#)

By proactively identifying, engaging and motivating the right partners before the formal launch, it would lend a degree of unwavering creditability to the process and strengthen the conversation, goals & outcomes. In addition, probable funding sources would need to be identified and successfully applied for and granted in order to provide the assets required to sustain program momentum and achieving objectives. Ideally, prospective committee members could achieve both criteria, as an established or developing DEI program and a funding source.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, the Chair's should:

- Invite decision-makers who can approve activities and resources.
- Include influencers whom decision-makers listen to and who know the pulse of the business community.
- Invite funders (prospective private and public sponsors)
- Invite elected officials
- Invite the skeptics. Although they may not buy in initially, their perspectives and your ability to sway their reservations will help to bolster transformation.

Committee assignments are not and shall not be a “ceremonial seat at the table”, but rather a collection of strategic stakeholder organizations that have intimate knowledge of the past challenges and the demonstrated passion to pursue attainable remedies, particularly in racial subsets, in Stockton and San Joaquin County.<sup>15</sup>

The Business GUIDE Committee will be responsible for providing advice and support for the development and implementation of diversity and inclusion programs and initiatives to

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<sup>14</sup> Conversation with Culver City Chamber of Commerce (CA)

<sup>15</sup> Conversation with Culver City Chamber of Commerce (CA)

augment member retention and recruitment strategies and provide advice and assistance with respect to the continued evolution of the Chamber's diversity and inclusion standards.<sup>16</sup>

But stepping up to this role will mean taking diverse leadership development efforts seriously as well as understanding the role of the Chamber in providing broad civic fabric. Once again and disappointedly, those businesses who don't embrace the growing diversity of Stockton and San Joaquin County are likely to see themselves increasingly sidelined economically and socially, while those that embrace it are not only likely to be more successful, but can play a critical role in helping smooth our path to a more prosperous business community for everyone.<sup>17</sup>

Diversity is not just about race and income inclusion. Business leaders see the opportunity that change brings and they increasingly recognize that there is a strong economic case for embracing our growing diversity.<sup>18</sup>

### **Business GUIDE Committee Strategy**

A launch and anchoring event could help raise the visibility of the Business GUIDE program to a point where it is a known quantity for the majority of businesses in our community. Ideally, a launch and anchoring event will not only create broad awareness but will build curiosity for businesses to know more about the Business GUIDE and to do more to support and advance its initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

At the launch or soon after, the committee work begins. Committee members must agree on how often to meet, how long and establish protocols for appropriate decorum at the meetings.

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<sup>16</sup> [THE CHAMBER of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia \(PA\) DEI program](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Diversity & Inclusion For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy: February 2017](#)

<sup>18</sup> [ACCE: DEI One Sheet](#)

<sup>19</sup> [University of Michigan, DEI program](#)

In order to successfully implement the Business GUIDE program, the committee must then develop:

- Mission and Vision for the program
- Goals and Objectives
- Expectations/Outcomes
- Measurement/Metrics

### **Mission (example)**

The Business GUIDE Committee’s mission is to build and sustain an equitable and inclusive business environment in Stockton, San Joaquin County and our region, and to become a civic model for the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that advance all education, innovation, and economic growth in the Central Valley.

### **Statement of Values on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (example)**

The Chamber believes that celebrating diversity, championing equity and cultivating inclusion, with dignity and civility, are critical to the economic vitality and overall health of Stockton, San Joaquin County and the entire Central Valley.

The Chamber is committed to advancing the values and benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion in our city and county. We believe that each member of our community and business deserves every opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a strong economy and a vibrant quality of life.

To best serve and represent our members, the Chamber is committed to building and maintaining a diverse, equitable and inclusive business environment. In doing so, we strive to become a civic model for the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that advance education, innovation, and economic growth.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [Loudoun Chamber of Commerce \(VA\)](#)

## **Set realistic Goals and timelines (examples)**

Goal setting should be realistic and doable. For example, the first year's measurable outcomes could be to engage the membership and community with surveys and a cultural assessment.

The assessment would provide a wealth of information and **baseline data** so to evaluate our member's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The Business GUIDE Committee would then need to determine and prioritize next steps based on the Chamber's overall strategy, resources, and bandwidth. For many organizations, the next step would be to host a professional training by an outside facilitator to "guide" the Chamber on their journey. Potential topics include implicit (unconscious) bias, DEI, and racial equity.

Several examples on potential equity strategies could be deployed immediately upon adaptation of the Business GUIDE. These are:

- GUIDE principles applied to monthly mixers (locations)
- GUIDE principles applied to speakers at Green Team/REDTeam/FRESH meetings
- GUIDE principles applied to Green Certifications/DAC Areas
- GUIDE monthly Meetings/Zoom Planning/Touch Base
- GUIDE quarterly Seminars and trainings
- GUIDE principles applied to Chamber Committees/Chairs
- GUIDE principles to recruit a diverse board applicant pool

Actual Goals and Objectives would be a product of the Business GUIDE Committee recommendations, approved by the Board, for staff implementation. Each Goal should be quantifiable with perceptible results that are articulated to funders and the Chamber Board of Directors on a regular basis.

## **Budget Considerations**

In order to sustain the Business GUIDE program, facilitate speakers and offer training seminars with DEI experts as well as marketing, corporate & public sector sponsorship in excess of \$100,000 per year would be needed to achieve Chamber goals. Costs associated with the program include the hiring of a part-time Coordinator, speaker fees, marketing and administrative costs to underwrite the program etc. The Chamber is well positioned to proactively embrace the DEI era, not just as a good business practice, but for financial supplementation of Chamber non-dues revenue programs.

Diversity & Inclusion initiatives are on everyone's mind in 2021. Among the year's other historic challenges to our society, an awakening has seemingly emerged challenging business practices based on outdated and stereotypical principles that have no place in a world surging forward twenty plus years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The workplace – remote or otherwise – is a major flashpoint in this discussion, as it doesn't take too deep a dive to discover that many long-established American companies are still running off of mid-century policies designed to keep the status-quo at workplaces. But things are finally changing, a paradigm shift if you will, thanks to trendsetting, socially cognizant businesses and organizations. Several San Joaquin County businesses are working on or have effective, progressive D&I initiatives in place. These influential businesses are working towards a workplace future of equality, open-mindedness, and the other benefits of having a truly diverse employee base. It just makes good business sense.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> [Comparably-10 Companies With Impactful D&I Initiatives: Yancy Berns 9-29-20](#)

This is a partial list of advocates and/or potential sponsors of the Business GUIDE program:<sup>22</sup>

Comcast Corporation

California Water Company

Pacific Gas & Electric Company

Wells Fargo

Bank of America

McDonalds Golden State Restaurant Group

Kaiser Permanente

Big Valley Ford

As mentioned earlier, private and public sector Grants and Contracts would be greatly enhanced by the addition of the Business GUIDE as one of its “guiding” principles. Many private organizations and public sector agencies are investing in those entities that embrace DEI strategies and are requiring that grantees have policies and programs in place in order to be successful applicants.

### **Conclusion**

The Business GUIDE is not a new concept for Chambers, but it would be a new, proactive movement for the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce. The Business GUIDE would not only benefit the Chamber internally but also most importantly provide a 21<sup>st</sup> Century roadmap to our members and our community.<sup>23</sup> Most candidly, the Chamber will be able to market itself and its services to those businesses from different backgrounds and ethnicities more

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<sup>22</sup> Companies websites Analysis

<sup>23</sup> [Triangle Diversity, Equity Inclusivity Alliance Roadmap 1-14-21](#)

effectively, engage with a broader segment of the business community more competently, and amplify the power of community, via the lens of the Business GUIDE, throughout Stockton and San Joaquin County more confidently.

Through purposeful promotion and implementation of the Business GUIDE goals and objectives, the Chamber will forever charge forward as the Catalyst, Convener and Champion of the business community and strive to be that *Agent of Change*, which is so desperately needed in the business world and society. Again, every day, the pursuit of better should drive us!<sup>24</sup>

### **Summary in a Nutshell**

Who: The Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce

What: Creation of the Business Growing Unity Inclusion Diversity & Equity (GUIDE) Program

When: Launching July 2021

Where: Stockton, San Joaquin County and Central Valley

Why: To build and sustain an equitable and inclusive business environment in Stockton and San Joaquin County and our region, and to become a civic model for the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that advance education, innovation, and economic growth in the Central Valley.

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<sup>24</sup> [W.A.C.E. How to Become a 3C Chamber: Chamber Leadership Podcast](#)

**This proposal is a configuration of references from several well-developed Chamber DEI programs and organizations from across the U.S., and has been modified by our Chamber for the purpose of this presentation.**

**References:**

W.A.C.E. Webinar Series: Race & Equity-Is there a place for Chambers?

W.A.C.E. How to Become a 3C Chamber: Chamber Leadership Podcast

Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE)

Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, CA

THE CHAMBER of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, PA

Morrisville Chamber of Commerce, NC

Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce, KS

Culver City Chamber of Commerce, CA

Loudoun Chamber of Commerce, VA

New Nonprofit Narratives for DEI-Center for Nonprofits & Philanthropy

Other Google searches