

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN BROOKINGS REPORT ON FINDINGS

Executive Summary
March 1, 2022

Who We Are: Brookings Inclusive Collaborative

- South Dakota State University
- Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce
- Brookings Economic Development Corporation
- Vision Brookings
- Brookings Human Rights Commission
- Funded by a **Bush Foundation Community Innovation Grant**

By diversity, we mean the range of human differences that includes (but is not limited to) language, religion, race/ethnicity, nation of origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, and socio-economic status.

Inclusion means the feeling of being included, respected, and valued within a group or community.

By the Numbers: What Discussions Are Included in this Report

- One **In-Person Community Conversation** at the Swiftel Center on April 17, 2021
- One **Virtual Community Conversation** via Zoom on April 24, 2021
- **37 participants** in the above two Community Conversations
- **33 participants** in follow-up deliberative focus groups, held from June – September 2021, with culturally diverse employees in healthcare, manufacturing, higher education, retail/service, and agriculture

Aspects of the Problem of a Lack of Inclusion in Brookings

- Racism and microaggressions
- Language barriers
- Difficulty recruiting diverse employees and leaders
- Discomfort talking about cultural differences
- Lack of belonging to Brookings

Approach 1: Embrace and celebrate our diverse community

- Brookings has a number of **organizations that support diversity and inclusion**
- Better coordinate efforts to **welcome and include all members** of the community
- Be careful **not to overburden marginalized group members**
- Bring in the **whole community**
- Increase **programming and activities** in the school system

*No importa de dónde eres,
estamos contentos que seas
nuestro vecino.*

No matter where you are
from, we're glad you're
our neighbor.

لا يهم اين ولدتم، و لكننا
سعداء انكم جيراننا.



Approach 2: Educate to welcome, reconcile, and protect against future harm

- **“Welcome” signs** in the community are helpful
- Need **better communication and publicity** for events
- Hold events for **listening across differences**, such as dialogues
- **Eliminate barriers to participation** in community events
- Organize **anti-bias, upstander, and de-escalation trainings**

Approach 3: Encourage diversity- and inclusion-centered growth

- Challenges of the **“brain drain”** in Brookings and South Dakota
- Businesses and the community could **make new, diverse employees feel welcome**
- Develop Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (**DEI**) **boards** in local organizations and businesses
- **“Make the case”** for diversity
- **Resources in education and affordable housing** are needed in order to encourage people to move to and work in Brookings

Identifying Paths Forward

- Support **collaboration** across the community
- Bring **inclusion training and activities** into local schools
- Create **sustainable structures** for inclusion

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



THE BROOKINGS INCLUSIVE COLLABORATIVE AND COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ARE SUPPORTED BY A BUSH FOUNDATION COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANT.