

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Minutes for 02.13.2026

Present:

Ahnya Lewis, Jill Ballew, Robyn Elder, Ariela Unz, Nicholas Lerner, and Rob Hulse.

Excused:

Jaclyn Iden and Karena Schmitendorf.

Absent:

Carson Levine.

Co-Chair Ahnya opened the meeting with a welcome back, following a bit of a hiatus. First discussed was the need for a fresh start. There have been many changes in both the real estate industry and DEI nationwide. The LBOR remains committed to DEI.

Next, the committee visited about the DEI Corner articles that were authored by committee members. After several articles were released, the committee lost traction on this initiative and discussed restarting. Priority was given to establishing a fresh “why” statement before running out to membership with new articles.

Next, Co-Chairperson Jill Ballew shared what next steps might look like for a fresh start. Committee members expressed interest in starting with sessions on:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Empathy
- Active Listening

Sessions of this nature could equip members with tools and skills rather than jumping into more advanced topics that may have caused discomfort last year. NAR has training on fair housing and implicit bias, and the LBOR initiatives can build on these, with a focus on making people comfortable before addressing more challenging topics.

In the future, having a national speaker, like Melissa Majors, might be possible. Collaborating with other organizations like KCRAR, SAR, and FHAR would help to share costs, and make this type of expanded reach possible.

Also, the committee felt that sessions need to appeal to members and adding a CE (continuing education) component might be a good approach to help get members to attend.

Several resources were discussed for possible CE sessions, or for sessions that include designation. For example, At Home with Diversity. LBOR Staff will put together links to these resources for committee members to consider:

- At Home with Diversity – including possible instructors from the area
- Association Roadmap for Cultural Change
- Grants/Funding that might be available for DEI initiatives.

Next, the need for an effective Communications Plan was introduced. The committee discussed the need to create a plan that has an intentional beginning, that can evolve. It will be important not to get the “cart ahead of the horse” and stay on a plan with a consistent narrative, and manageable initiatives, keeping it simple at the beginning.

The committee discussed strategies to rebuild trust and engagement with their membership who may not have had a positive experience with previous DEI initiatives. The committee emphasized the importance of creating a clear "why" statement for their DEI efforts and using a clearly established communication plan will help to effectively share this with the membership.

The committee also committed to one another that this is a lot of work, and committee members are needed who care about DEI, and can be aligned with the concept that this is a working committee. The committee needs talent, but it will be important to be up front with potential new members about the work ahead.

Additionally, the committee discussed the opportunity to collaborate with other committees, like the Marketing & Communications Committee and the Education Committee to roll out DEI initiatives.

As the meeting was nearing a close, the committee discussed that it might be good to brainstorm on a kickoff of some type. This might be an event, but could be handled in a way that the committee hasn't thought of yet.

Last, next steps were discussed.

- Co-Chairperson Ahnya asked each committee member to give thought and put energy into their own “why” statement, with a goal of discussing these at the next meeting and having consensus on what the collective DEI Committee “why” is.
- Co-Chairperson Jill volunteered to take the discussion today, along with their thoughts from her experience, and put together a list that can be considered/used to create an action plan, and a communications plan.

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 23rd at 1pm, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50am.