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Changing the World's Energy Future

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Case Study

Intentional Inclusion: How embedding inclusion into the fabric of Idaho National Laboratory positioned the organization for a sustainable future

Five years ago, Idaho National Laboratory, a Department of Energy national laboratory headquartered in Idaho Falls, Idaho, set out to embed inclusion into every aspect of its organization. The goal was to ensure the laboratory is a place where everyone feels they are valued, belong and can bring their best selves to work each day. The laboratory viewed inclusion as a journey in which a consistent, collective commitment to intentional decision-making and incremental progress ultimately achieves amazing results. INL's intentional inclusion strategy has allowed the organization to:

- Retain and build a next-generation workforce to transform the world's energy future and secure the nation's most critical infrastructure.
- Lead inclusively through individual, team-based, and labwide actions that elevate organizational effectiveness.
- Grow laboratory cultural acumen by establishing a clear connection between inclusion and mission success.

This case study shares how INL brought employees along on the inclusion journey and inspired everyone to keep moving forward together.

Our Journey to Inclusivity: Accelerating Cultural Change

2005 was a historic year at INL for many reasons. INL was designated as the nation's lead nuclear energy laboratory and Battelle Energy Alliance assumed operational responsibility for bringing this vision to life. This contract change also brought INL its first vocal and visible executive-level diversity champion, Chief Operating Officer Juan Alvarez. For many years Diversity and Inclusion Manager Arantza Zabala worked to improve recruitment, retention and the work environment at INL. After many years of struggle, Zabala now had a partnering champion who brought diversity to the forefront. Alvarez's refreshing and persuasive voice on diversity helped INL embrace what research had consistently demonstrated: Employees who feel they belong are more motivated, productive and engaged. This leads to higher performance, improved quality and lower attrition. Fundamentally, people do their best work when they can bring their best selves to work. During BEA's time operating the laboratory we have seen a continuous reinforcement of this link between organizational effectiveness and diversity.

Both components were accelerated in 2015, when Mark Peters became laboratory

director. Peters brought a growth mindset grounded in his deep understanding about the value of diverse perspectives to scientific excellence. Peters challenged INL to move beyond a rudimentary awareness of diversity to implement inclusion, and he was clear about not waiting another decade to see results. This meant trust, psychological safety and belonging would be instilled across the laboratory, the number of underrepresented employees at INL would grow, and INL would become an inclusive work environment for everyone. He believed these to be far more than aspirational goals. They were necessary conditions to INL's future mission success.

One year later, Toni L. Carter joined INL as Inclusion and Diversity Strategy director. She benchmarked INL's progress on its inclusion journey – interviewing executive leaders, leading focus groups, analyzing quantitative data, and surveying employee feelings of belonging, inclusion, trust, psychological safety and respect. These insights drove a comprehensive Inclusion & Diversity strategy directly aligned to the Laboratory Plan and Agenda (business strategy), and fully embedded into every aspect of people operations. To implement this strategy, the Executive

Inclusion Council (EIC) launched in 2018 to translate intentional actions into laboratory results. This harnessed the energy and passion of INL's many executive-level inclusion champions.

In 2019, Marianne Walck joined INL as chief research officer, bringing a wealth of experience in inclusion advocacy and scientific excellence. In 2020, the EIC elevated inclusivity to an official INL value, in conjunction with excellence, ownership, safety, teamwork and integrity. Inclusivity – our commitment to building an empowered workforce that's inclusive and diverse, where everyone feels they belong – provides a foundation for how we achieve our central mission of transforming the world's energy future and securing the nation's most critical infrastructure.

John Wagner's ascension to laboratory director in December 2020 further accelerated INL's inclusion journey. Wagner brought INL a new focus on transforming our culture and the way we work. His first 14 months of impactful leadership, including a bold labwide commitment to net-zero carbon emissions, consistently reinforced his deep, personal commitment to inclusion.

Progress: Embedding Inclusivity into Organizational Operations

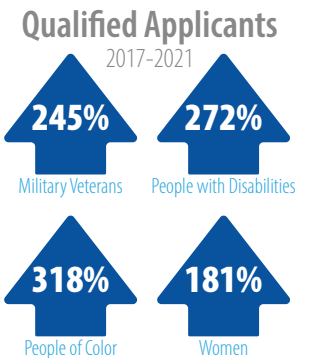
Over the last five years, INL has made significant progress elevating our employment brand, strengthening our employment value proposition, widening our talent circle, mitigating unnecessary attrition, and empowering employees to foster an inclusive environment where everyone can develop, grow and maximize their fullest potential. The results, spanning every aspect of INL's mission, demonstrate what the research predicted: Creating inclusively diverse, high-performing teams meaningfully enhances collaboration, promotes innovation and increases organizational effectiveness.

Research also foreshadowed the effect of inclusion on INL's resilience – our capacity to sustain performance in the face of unforeseen disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of a safe, welcoming and empowering workplace, especially when the workplace itself changed beyond recognition. INL's foundation of inclusion augmented our resilience at a time when every organization in the world faced significant challenges. The first year of the pandemic saw the most inclusively diverse class of new hires in laboratory history, an accelerated growth in scientific impact, a decline in attrition to record lows, and a seamless transition of learning experiences to focus on pandemic-related topics like grief, stress, trauma, health and well-being. This experience reminds us inclusivity is not merely an outcome of INL's workforce of the future, but also a necessary input.

INL's inclusion strategy is making an impactful difference. From 2017-21:

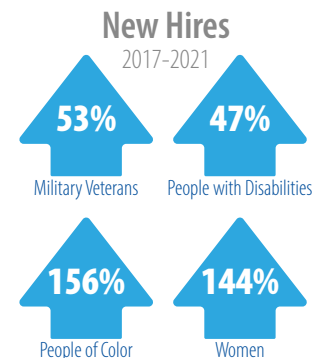
Inclusive branding produced 187% growth in qualified applicants to INL jobs, rising from less than 7,000 per year to more than 20,000.

- Local talent pipelines – 65% of new hires – were strengthened by publishing jobs to workforce agencies and community organizations providing career services to inclusively diverse talent.
- Regional talent pipelines – 9% of new hires – were strengthened by celebrating monthly inclusion themes on public radio and social media, reaching up to 1 million listeners and 232,000 fans/followers across adjoining regions of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming.
- National talent pipelines – 26% of new hires – were strengthened by print and digital advertisements that annually reached more than 7 million inclusively diverse readers and 1,290 colleges and universities through Black Journal, DiverseAbility, DiversityMBA, Diversity in STEAM, Hispanic Network Magazine, Native America Today, Professional Woman's Magazine, Profiles in Diversity Journal, and U.S. Veterans Magazine.



Inclusive hiring strategies – planning, sourcing and interviewing for inclusivity – translated this expanded talent pipeline into new INL hires. Inclusion-driven partnerships specifically:

- Expanded outreach to hundreds of job boards serving local markets and 167 community-based organizations nationwide with direct connections to inclusively diverse talent in science, engineering, and skilled trades and crafts, resulting in 20 new hires.
- Augmented recruiter sourcing with cutting-edge tools for finding passive, inclusively diverse talent, resulting in five strategic or critical new hires.
- Strengthened manager confidence and accountability for inclusive hiring, leading to the percentage of INL requisitions with inclusive slates growing from 61% to 83%.



Intentional approaches to retention, engagement and career development enabled INL to engage more colleagues across the laboratory and provide additional professional development opportunities.

These results, combined with efforts to embed inclusion into practices for pay equity, benefits, supplier diversity, corporate philanthropy and executive accountability, helped INL earn national recognition as an employer of choice.

- Leading Disability Employer – National Organization on Disability (2018-2021)
- Employer Support Freedom Award Nominee – U.S. Secretary of Defense (2019)
- Best Places to Work for LGBTQ+ Equality – Corporate Equality Index (2018 –2021)
- Top 50 Companies for Women & People of Color – DiversityMBA (2020, 2021)
- Top 100 Internships & Top 25 Internships for LGBTQ+ Diversity – Firsthand (2022)

Future Sustainability: Moving Forward Together

As a national laboratory, INL is challenged to simultaneously advance nuclear research, protect our nation's most critical infrastructure, forge new horizons in clean energy, deliver on our net-zero pledge, sustain unique scientific facilities, and uplift the communities we serve. These goals depend upon a workforce that is engaged, high-performing, inclusively diverse, psychologically safe, competitively compensated, and empowered to bring their best selves to work each day. To achieve this, we are guided by our inclusion commitment and passion for creating belonging and togetherness.

Future strategy will expand upon this core commitment, and bring transformational results powered by critical partners who have persistently embedded inclusivity into their operations.



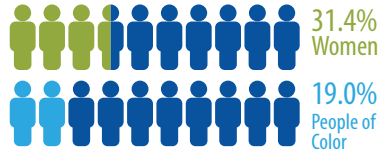
INL's Inclusion Commitment

- Build an empowered workforce that's both inclusive and diverse
- Enable employees to leverage multicultural experiences
- Maximize contributions that lead to innovative energy solutions

We will:

1 Widen and deepen our talent circle, fully leveraging the groundbreaking efforts of University Partnerships, Early Workforce, Human Resources and Supply Chain teams. We'll also continue to solicit INL colleagues to help recruit and retain next-generation talent.

University Partnerships FY-21 Multiyear intern pipeline is:



K-12 STEM Education:



Supplier Diversity - % of FY-21 spending to small businesses:

- 19% to women-owned
- 10% to disadvantaged businesses
- 4.3% to service-disabled, veteran-owned

Supply Chain Initiative

Specifically aims to expand access to energy careers for youth, military veterans and transitioning adults.

2 Strengthen the alignment of inclusivity with mission impact, engaging colleagues in strategically intentional efforts to build more high-performing teams conducting next-generation science.



3 Minimize unnecessary attrition, ensuring INL is an employer of choice for everyone – our current colleagues and candidates. We desire to be an irresistible employer!

Our Workforce Achieved

\$2.2 million

in savings from reduced attrition in CY-19 and CY-20

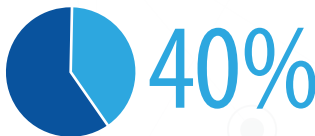
Closed

unnecessary attrition gap for people with disabilities by CY-17 and women by CY-21

50% reduction

in unnecessary attrition gap for people of color and military veterans since CY-18

4 Expand access to, and engagement with, continuous learning and professional development opportunities that enhance cultural acumen, psychological safety and collaboration.



of INL employees attend inclusion learning experiences annually. Attendance broadly reflects INL's inclusive diversity of ability, age, directorate, ethnicity, gender, job function, military experience, race, seniority level, tenure and workplace.

5 Enhance equity through empathy, building upon INL's commitment to fair compensation to operationalize how we support and care for our employees throughout their career, particularly during times of hardship.

Ongoing innovations are an important factor to INL earning national recognition as an employer of choice.

Continued expansions to support colleagues throughout their career, particularly through caregiving and retirement planning.

Win Together: How Can Individuals Help Foster Inclusivity?

An organization's inclusive future starts with everyone embracing their position as a leader – simultaneously driving mission success while living an organization's values. Everyone can elevate their impact on inclusion at their organization by engaging in any of the steps below.

Widen the talent circle: Retain and build the next-generation workforce

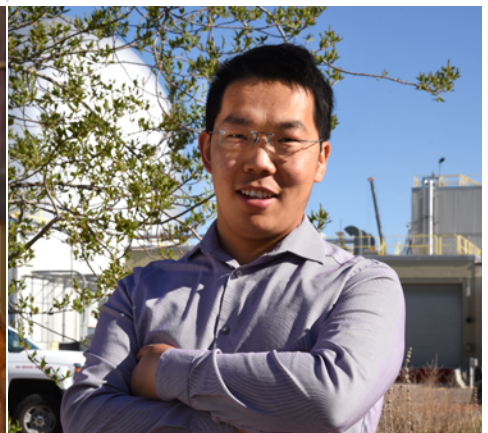
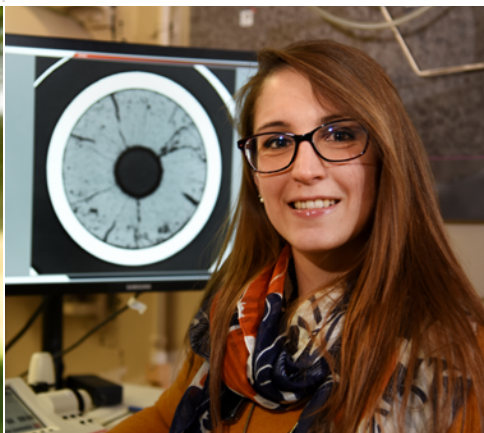
- Bring your best self to work! Positive feelings spread as quickly as negative attitudes. Treat everyone with dignity and respect, and help others do the same.
- Be a connector! Provide professional development, career growth and learning opportunities for everyone. Learn and pursue what's available, help connect others who seek growth, and celebrate outstanding performance by recognizing others.
- Share inclusion-themed social media posts and job announcements.
- Managers and mentors play a crucial role in the hiring process. Ask your recruiters to ensure you have an inclusive slate of candidates to interview; this brings measurable improvements to overall candidate quality and inclusivity.

Lead through inclusion: Personal and team-based actions

- Strengthen your understanding of inclusion and encourage your team to join you in the journey! Find out the learning resources your organization provides.
- Practice courageous conversations by finding common ground, checking your mindset, and engaging others with positive intent.
- Practice being an ally for people who cannot advocate for themselves. Model and grow cultural acumen to enhance communication with others. Two suggested ways to do this:
 1. Join an inclusion group in your organization.
 2. Connect with others to expand your leadership skills.

Growing acumen: Elevate your knowledge of inclusion for mission success

- Understand your organization's core business to make informed suggestions and provide solutions.
- Researchers can strengthen proposals by demonstrating how research advances the inclusion journey.
- Share your commitment to inclusion publicly. Read [Our Commitment to a Better World](#), a letter from INL senior leadership, for an example of how the laboratory shares its values.
- Attend symposiums and events to help gain confidence and competence with the complex intersection of science, business, teamwork and inclusion.



Summary

Our intentional effort to embed inclusivity into the fabric of our organization has brought measurable impacts on employee engagement, collaboration and teamwork. But mission success requires our continuous commitment, accelerating our journey until INL is a place where everyone feels psychologically safe, empowered and like they belong.

Inclusion and diversity are everyone's responsibility, so let's win together!

About Idaho National Laboratory

Battelle Energy Alliance manages INL for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy. INL is the nation's center for nuclear energy research and development, and also performs research in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and the environment.

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