
Why Schools and Education Organizations Should Hire a Consultant for Diversity and Equity Initiatives

When school districts and other local education agencies embark upon diversity and equity initiatives, they may be moving into an area in which they lack specific expertise. Still, not surprisingly, it's often a tough decision to allocate funding for external support. And don't even get me started on finding the right consultant for the organization and their specific initiative and equity challenges!



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A L Berry Consulting, Inc. is a niche firm focused on academic, or educational, equity. What makes us unique in the DEI world is our focus on educational outcomes for children ages 4 to 18, curriculum and instructional practices, and specific expertise in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

We've composed a list of the top reasons you should hire a consultant for your diversity and equity initiative.

Expertise

A good consultant works in a particular area, and only in that area. They typically have advanced degrees and are subject matter experts in at least one component of childhood and adolescent education. If your diversity and equity initiative is new to your organization, hiring a consultant means that your organization can continue being experts in their work and rely on the consultant's expertise for your diversity and equity initiative. There's no need to hire new employees to manage your diversity and equity initiative, to retrain an existing employee, or to deal with the legalities of a full-time employee.

Best Practices

Expertise doesn't come to a consultant overnight. It takes numerous projects and years of effort to gain the knowledge required to work in diverse school systems and organizations, and with their myriad challenges. In the years spent developing that level of expertise, a good consultant has seen or heard everything. They know the best practices as well as the pitfalls. If they haven't already heard of the issue, they likely have come across similar issues and probably have some excellent ideas on addressing yours.

Experience

The chances are that a good consultant has already done a project like yours. At the very least, they've dealt with components of your project across several other organizations. As a result, they know the steps, requirements, time estimates, and common roadblocks that face educational organizations such as yours. So, rely on your consultant's expertise and experience. Let them help plan your initiative and your action plan, and you'll experience fewer surprises along the way.

Professional Partners

Partnering with a consultant isn't necessarily a short-term commitment. Depending on the scope of your initiative, you may find that you'll need ongoing support beyond year one. For example, suppose you choose to work with a consultant as a trusted advisor. In that case, you can build a long-term

relationship with an expert who understands the unique nature of your organization, your learners, your community, and your key stakeholders. When you have issues or concerns as your action plan is implemented, you already know who to ask! If you have future projects of a similar nature, your consultant already knows your organization's structure and culture.

Professional Learning

A good consultant is interested in your organization's success. They are happy to share their subject matter expertise with their clients. Perhaps you don't need diversity and equity initiative planning services. Still, ask your consultant for advice. They're usually happy to offer tips along the way. In addition, a good consultant focused on education will provide professional learning as part of their services to help you build internal capacity for continuing the work. Excellent professional learning for your educators, leaders, and staff increases employee buy-in and can help garner external stakeholder support as well.

Fresh Eyes

Since consultants don't work within your organization, they are not influenced by its internal politics. If you present a consultant with a problem, their solution is based on the information provided without the influence of personal bias. If your organization has an internal debate on solutions and action planning, consultants can help mediate the discussion and provide unbiased advice.

Catalyst for Change

It is often said that no one likes change except for babies with messy diapers. But sometimes, change is needed, and a consultant may be the logical choice to implement the changes. One benefit to the organization is that the consultant can bring about change without concern for issues that tend to get in the way when an organization is trying to implement a diversity and equity initiative.

Cost-Effectiveness

Hiring a consultant might seem expensive at first blush, especially at the beginning of your initiative. The expense of external consultants is a common fallacy. When you partner with a consultant, it is an investment in the success of your organization. It is an investment in the academic success of your learners. A good consultant will use their expertise to help you plan and implement appropriately. They can be the difference between having a project done on paper and having a project done that affects the change you desire.

Dr. Almitra L. Berry is the CEO, founder, and principal consultant of ALBerry Consulting, Incorporated. She is a nationally recognized motivational speaker, author, and consultant on the topic of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in America's K12 education system. Her works and research focus on equity and academic achievement for marginalized learners – particularly in majority-of-color, low-wealth, large, urban school districts.

Dr. Berry is host of the podcast, Educational Equity Emancipation which hit New & Noteworthy on iTunes within six weeks of its launch, and author of the book Effecting Change for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners, and numerous other articles addressing educational needs, provision gaps, equity, and challenges related to the academic stagnation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr. Berry has worked with educators, leaders, and school systems throughout the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. She has presented at scores of conferences on the topics of equity, leadership, curriculum reform, and meeting the needs of historically underserved and marginalized learners. She calls upon educators and educational leaders to evaluate policy, curriculum, instruction, discipline, supervision, and professional learning with a lens focused on equity.