Argonne National Laboratory

Applying Change Management Techniques to Support Equity, Transparency, and Community Representation

Relevant Rubric Area(s)

Prevention:

- Other Prevention

Organizational Change:

- Using the Procedural Justice Principles
- Leveraging the strengths of distinct stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them

Description of Work

The Argonne National Laboratory Community Engagement Plan (CEP), created by our senior leaders, outlines a comprehensive set of actions within five high-level themes:

- Leadership Commitment, Communication, and Engagement;
- Updated Policies and Practices;
- Training for Awareness, Understanding, and Skill Building;
- Measurement and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement;
- Reporting.

In order to effect sustainable change, Argonne recognizes the importance of understanding how organizational issues affect people and offering them opportunities to have a voice and engage in the process of changing for the better.

With that in mind, in 2020, Argonne named two prominent research leaders as executive champions and formed the Argonne Action Collaborative Steering Committee (SC) to address the themes in the CEP shortly thereafter. The SC is composed of 15 research and operations leaders and staff from across the Laboratory. Project management and change management support is included on the committee, as an Argonne best practice.

The first task of the SC entailed reviewing and prioritizing the actions in the CEP. The SC identified five priorities and created implementation teams for each priority. The teams are:

- *Lab Structure and Process.* Identify potential vulnerabilities related to gender and sexual harassment in Argonne structures, policies, and processes and provide recommendations for addressing the vulnerabilities.
- *Lab Culture Metrics.* Gather information on Laboratory culture measuring progress, and make recommendations toward the prevention of sexual and gender harassment and abusive behavior.
- *Personal and Interactive Training.* Make training related to gender and sexual harassment personal, interactive, and effective.
- *Communication and Messaging.* Create and implement a plan that communicates consistent messages regarding the Action Collaborative.
- *Code of Conduct.* Collaborate on the creation and approval of an integrated and comprehensive Code of Business Ethics and Conduct for the Argonne community.

In December 2020, to engage the Argonne community and create the implementations teams, the Steering Committee used an open and inclusive process and called for nominations from across the Laboratory, including self-nominations as well as nominations from leadership. More than 100 people volunteered to participate, representing all directorates. Volunteers included operations and research staff at various career levels from early career staff and post-docs to senior scientists and Argonne fellows. The response exceeded expectations and highlighted the interest in and importance of preventing sexual and gender harassment. This inclusive process supported Argonne's change management approach and Core Values, and recognized the importance of embedding established Procedural Justice Principles by:

- Giving everyone an equal opportunity to participate and have a voice to share their experiences, expertise, and feedback;
- Ensuring team member opinions and experiences are treated with respect, empathy, and dignity;
- Guiding discussions, decisions, and project goals with transparency;
- Instilling an environment that promotes listening without bias or judgement; and
- Leading with trustworthiness, clearly articulated expectations, and desired outcomes.

In spring 2021, the Steering Committee selected 40 of the 100 volunteers to serve on four of the implementation teams. The remaining 60 volunteers formed the Argonne Action Collaborative Community (AACC), which serves as a transparent and trustworthy sounding board, provides feedback and support to the implementation teams and the SC, and communicates the work of the Action Collaborative within their respective networks and groups.

In summer 2021, the AACC played an integral role in supporting the Code of Conduct implementation team. The Argonne Legal team collected and clarified elements of employee policies, research codes of conduct, DEI statements, and Argonne Core Values to draft the new

Argonne Code of Business Ethics and Conduct, which applies to the full Argonne community—employees, collaborators, users, students, vendors, and visitors—and outlines expectations for conducting work with the highest scientific, professional, and ethical standards. Once the code was ready for formal approval, the AACC gathered in a series of forums where the new code was shared and where they gave feedback on the document and how best to communicate it to the full Argonne community. This helped shape the implementation of the new code, which became effective in March 2022.

Also in summer 2021, the Steering Committee made the film "Picture a Scientist" available for streaming to the Argonne community and scheduled a series of discussions. The AACC was recruited to help promote both the film and the discussions.

Between 2021 and 2022, three implementation teams—Culture Metrics, Making Training Personal and Interactive, and Structure and Process—reached out to the broader Laboratory community to gather input on their respective focus areas. They cast a wide net, internally and externally, through focus groups, interviews, and surveys. The teams attracted stakeholders from the AACC; the Women in Science and Technology Employee Resource Group; the Hispanic/Latino Club; Employee Relations; Human Resources; Legal; Laboratory leadership; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Councils; the Strategic Security Sciences Group; the ESHQ training group; and the Leadership Institute, plus postdoctoral researchers and the ombuds. They also benefited from the insights resulting from an external benchmark survey sent to chief Human Resources officers in 12 national laboratories, including Argonne.

In May 2022, the implementation teams presented their final reports to the Steering Committee, highlighting the work they conducted, the stakeholders they received input from, including the AACC, and team recommendations. The Steering Committee will consolidate the teams' findings and recommendations and present them to Laboratory leadership to determine the recommendations that can be implemented and those that can be integrated with the Lab's DEI and talent strategies to create sustainable change.

Moving forward, this summer (2022), after receiving input and direction from Lab leadership, the Steering Committee anticipates sharing the team recommendations with the implementation team members, the AACC, and the broader Lab community to highlight decisions that were made based on team recommendations, provide insights, and gather input on next steps.

Learnings: Unlike other groups formed to create connection points across the Laboratory, this community was not formed by assignment. Members volunteered because of an interest in contributing to the prevention of sexual and gender harassment. The process the Laboratory used, including strong change management techniques, alignment with our Core Values, and

embedding recognized Procedural Justice Principles in the Argonne Action Collaborative's efforts, has proven to be an invaluable way to:

- Engage people who have different work and life experiences related to sexual and gender harassment:
- Listen without bias and judgement;
- Identify opportunities for improvement in policies, processes, practices, and cultural norms;
- Propose concrete recommendations to affect and measure change; and
- Make significant progress on the Argonne National Laboratory Action Collaborative Community Engagement Plan.

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