



One Thomas Circle, NW
Suite 1050
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www.verra.org

Request for Proposals: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant

15 December 2020

About Verra

Verra is a global leader helping to tackle the world's most intractable environmental and social challenges. As a mission-driven non-profit organization, Verra is committed to helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve livelihoods, and protect natural resources across the private and public sectors. We support climate action and sustainable development with standards, tools, and programs that credibly, transparently, and robustly assess environmental and social impacts, and enable funding for sustaining and scaling up projects that verifiably deliver these benefits. We work in any arena where we see a need for clear standards, a role for market-based mechanisms, and an opportunity to generate significant environmental and social value.

DEI at Verra

Verra began its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) journey during the October 2019 annual retreat, where we began a conversation about how bias impacts staff, job seekers, and potentially other stakeholders. In February 2020, Verra contracted a consultant to deliver a one-day training intended to build staff capacity to recognize bias and communicate with greater sensitivity. Unfortunately, the training fell short of expectations due to a poor match between the trainer and Verra's goals. In May 2020, all staff participated in the Harvard Implicit Association Test in preparation for small group discussions about bias and how it affects each of us personally, and our work at Verra. These discussions were led by team leaders across Verra's five functional teams; Programs, Operations, Innovations, LandScale, and Market Development and Communications. In June 2020, Verra publicly affirmed its [commitment](#) to ensure that DEI will inform organization-wide efforts from recruiting and hiring to ongoing staff and stakeholder engagement and programmatic work. As the first step in this process, Verra hosted an all staff discussion to reflect on race and inequality in the U.S., reflecting on recent social unrest across the country and internationally.

In June 2020 DEI at Verra became more formalized with the establishment of the Verra DEI Working Group (WG) whose main objective is to support the operationalization of Verra's DEI commitment. The WG has begun to take stock of the state of DEI at Verra and to list potential [DEI topics to address](#). Given the breadth and depth of DEI ambitions reflected in this working list, Verra recognizes the need for support prioritizing high-impact issues and crafting a comprehensive action plan.

The following four points underscore the value and intent of Verra's proposed DEI work:



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- 1) **Verra is growing rapidly and now has an opportunity to strengthen DEI as part of organizational operations and culture.** Over the past year and a half, Verra has grown from about 20 staff to more than 40 staff, and the organization continues to grow. In addition to this growth, the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting remote work has contributed to the challenge of building organizational culture that is cohesive and reflective of Verra's DEI commitment. We note that even prior to Covid-19, a significant number of Verra staff have always worked remotely. These factors highlight the importance of Verra building and maintaining organizational culture that promotes DEI.
- 2) **Addressing both U.S. and international perspectives of DEI is a priority for Verra.** The scope of Verra's programmatic work is global and the majority of our stakeholders are based internationally. Among staff, about half are either based internationally, or are based in the U.S. but are originally from another country. We recognize that DEI is different across regions, and informed by different histories and cultures. To be impactful, we acknowledge that our DEI work must be relevant to all of our stakeholders, those from the U.S. and beyond.
- 3) **Effective DEI work requires a holistic approach, internal leadership and participation, and external support.** As an organization, Verra emphasizes actionable deliverables and a measured approach to achieving its commitments. Given the wide-ranging scope and cross-team nature of DEI, the WG believes that success will depend on assessment, clear goals, a DEI plan, and specific activities informed by experts in the field.
- 4) **Verra is committed to becoming a DEI leader in the non-profit environment and development sector.** Although the need for DEI at any workplace is not new, following recent national and international events and internal reflection, Verra is more motivated, focused, and organized to address DEI than ever before. Historically, and particularly within the environmental sector, social initiatives often do not receive commensurate commitment. Verra aims to do better by leveraging the same [organizational values](#) that define our work, to also advance our DEI objectives. Verra aims to lead by example in promoting DEI as a global non-profit in the environment and development sector.

The WG plans to pursue a holistic approach toward DEI, and an important portion of the work will require the specific expertise, external perspective, and dedicated focus of a consultant. We encourage candidates to submit proposals that help us identify what action we should take to promote DEI based on our organizational values and DEI ambitions. We envision that initial DEI work will take place over the course of several months to a year, likely starting with an assessment of the state of DEI at Verra, proceeding to drafting DEI goals and a plan, and later helping Verra implement DEI activities. This work may continue (e.g., on a retainer basis) as we seek to undertake more work on DEI.



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Scope of Work

The scope of work includes assistance with the below components. For workshops or interactive sessions, Verra plans to hold separate sessions for staff and the Verra Board of Directors. We welcome proposals that may recommend additional or different actions in the interest of promoting DEI at Verra.

- 1) **Co-design and conduct an assessment of the state of DEI at Verra.** This will include a comprehensive stocktake of Verra’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats with respect to DEI. Specifically, Verra sees the need to assess: (1) current level of awareness of bias and sensitivity in communication among staff and Board members, (2) current hiring and retention policies at Verra, and (3) identification of other areas for improvement. Assessment results will be used as a reference when later assessing progress against goals.
- 2) **Collaborate with the WG to articulate a clear set of DEI goals and draft an action plan with specific activities.** We envision the consultant working with the WG to design clear and measurable DEI goals for Verra, along with an action plan that would include a theory of change, timelines, and detailed descriptions for the kinds of activities that will be implemented within Verra to promote DEI. Depending on the topic, activities may be designed as interactive workshops with staff and the Board, targeted training for the WG, or expert advisory on WG recommendations to improve Verra’s organizational policies and procedures. It bears noting that a sizable portion of staff, including WG members, as well as Board members, are based outside of Washington, DC, as this may inform approaches to collaboration.
- 3) **Work with all staff to implement the DEI action plan.** The consultant will work with Verra to implement the DEI plan and cultural shift within the organization. Collaboration with staff may require a variety of activities ranging from facilitating sensitive discussions about race and bias, to building capacity for intercultural awareness and communication among staff and the Board, and updating Verra policies for recruiting and hiring, compensation, promotion, and other policies.
- 4) **Provide ongoing advice and support.** We are cognizant that even with the WG and a sound DEI plan in place, there may be additional needs for DEI support. For example, we may identify additional needs for workshops to address particular topics, or we may identify a specific organizational policy in need of an update. Should these needs arise, we would like to rely on the support of a team that is familiar with Verra and our DEI work well enough to be able to jump into the work without the need to be introduced to the context or staff.

Timeline and Milestones

The below table sets out the timeline for the various deliverables sought, noting that proposals can suggest alternative timelines if that is deemed a better approach.



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Deliverable/Milestone	Tentative Timeline
1) Conduct DEI assessment	
a) Collaborate with WG to develop scope and metrics	2 weeks after contract signing
b) Conduct assessment	2 weeks after completing Milestone 1.a
c) Draft assessment report	2 weeks after completing Milestone 1.b
2) Develop DEI goals and action plan	
a) Collaborate with WG to develop goals	2 weeks after completing Milestone 1
b) Collaborate with WG to draft DEI plan	4-6 weeks after completing Milestone 2.a
3) Implement DEI action plan	
a) Advise WG on policy recommendations for recruitment and hiring	6-10 weeks after completing Milestone 2
b) Advise WG on policy recommendations for staff retention	6-10 weeks after completing Milestone 2
c) Conduct workshops for Verra staff and the Board	
i) Workshop 1	4-6 weeks after completing Milestone 2
ii) Workshop 2	2-4 weeks after completing first workshop
iii) Workshop 3	2-4 weeks after completing second workshop
4) Provide ongoing advice and support	Ongoing



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Budget

Verra has budgeted \$60,000 - \$75,000 for milestones 1 - 3 described in this request for proposals. Follow on work would be conducted on a retainer basis. We welcome feedback and suggestions for utilizing the total budgeted amount differently. Please also provide us with your daily or hourly rate(s) for ongoing advice and support as described in the timeline and milestones.

Criteria for Selection

The criteria immediately below will be used as minimum requirements to assess proposals and build a pool of appropriate candidates.

- The consultant has experience in delivering work products and conducting interactive sessions that incorporate U.S. and international perspectives of DEI. As an organization with global impact and with staff based around the world, a wide-ranging perspective is critical for Verra.
- The consultant has experience in the following areas:
 - Leading discussion about race, inequality, and discrimination in multicultural organizations
 - Leading discussion about bias and building capacity to recognize and reduce bias
 - Recruiting and hiring process:
 - Assessing current practices
 - Drafting and implementing recommendations to align current practices with recognized standards¹ for best practices

The preferred criteria below will be used to assess the pool of appropriate candidates for the best-fit consultant.

- The consultant represents a Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC) owned business
- The consultant embraces an active approach toward achieving equity for all people, considering systemic issues and how these impact individuals
- The consultant has a demonstrated focus in the nonprofit sector, and preferably with small or medium sized environmental organizations
- The consultant has experience facilitating workshops with participants of all professional levels, from junior staff to board members

¹ As one example, see this [2017 HBR article](#).



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Responses to the RFP

Respondents are welcome to submit clarifying questions on any of the above information. Please limit proposals to five to ten pages and include the following:

- Cost proposal (please note the above comment on the budget; if the proposed costs in the response deviate from the draft budget, please include some brief explanatory comments outlining the rationale for the modifications);
- Description of how the consultant plans to undertake the described scope of work; with regards to the DEI action plan, please briefly describe the product that will be developed for this task;
- Description of the consultant's qualifications to undertake the described scope of work and examples of similar projects or clients the proponent has worked for;
- Description of how the consultant would avoid any conflict of interest in undertaking the described scope of work; and
- Resumes/CVs of the consultant's team, if applicable, may be attached to the proposal and will not count toward the proposal page limit (each resume/CV is not to exceed two pages).

Note: All proposals and documents submitted to Verra will be kept confidential.

All documents must be submitted to the DEI WG at dei@verra.org by close of business **29 January 2021**. The top candidates will likely be asked clarifying questions, which may involve a call. We will finalize the selection of the consultant by mid- to late February 2021.

Legal Nature of this RFP

This RFP is an invitation for proposals and Verra is under no legal obligation to accept any proposal nor proceed with the RFP. Verra reserves the right to amend the requirements at any time.



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Annex 1

Since the DEI WG's first meetings, the group has thus far identified a number of topics that we want to address. This working list of topics is included below. The WG may decide to address only some of these topics, or even some topics not included in this list.

DEI Topics Under Consideration
Recruiting and hiring practices: employer bias, equal opportunity, and equity
Talent pipeline: internship program, junior staff, partnering with educational institutions
Mentorship and sponsorship programs and retaining employees of diverse backgrounds
Measuring inclusivity at the workplace: continuous monitoring and evaluation of DEI
Cultural and racial diversity: combating bias at the workplace
Sex and gender at the workplace: equality and combating bias
Physical and mental disabilities: equality and combating bias
Diversity of age and generational gaps: cohesion and combating bias
Unconscious bias, stereotypes, microaggressions, and code-switching at the workplace
Verra in our own backyard: gentrification and community development
Combating systemic and institutional racism, and injustices at large
Intercultural competence