EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN MSP

In 2016, partners worked through the Make It. MSP. initiative to take a deeper look at how the Minneapolis-Saint Paul (MSP) region was performing at attracting and retaining professionals to the region. That research found that while MSP was doing well at retaining white professionals, we were performing at a significantly lower level at retaining professionals of color. These findings drove the creation of BE MSP, a project team within the Make It. MSP. initiative focused specifically on improving the experiences of people of color in the region.

Data gives a glimpse into the realities of people of color’s relationship to our region, but gathering insight from their lived experiences are central to guiding the steps we take to move forward. Collectively, partners in the Make It. MSP. initiative recognized the importance that we listen first before responding to data. No assumptions. No shortcuts.

That same year, the BE MSP team of Make It. MSP. administered a survey across the region, successfully gathering responses from more than 1,200 people of color in MSP. The survey’s main themes and questions were informed by input from 12 focus groups with communities of color. Collaborations with the University of St. Thomas and Minnesota Public Radio helped to inspire intimate conversations and stories that brought the data to life.

The collaborative insight gathering effort helped Make It. MSP. develop a more concrete understanding of how survey themes were taking shape in the everyday lives of members of our communities of color. It also led to the formal creation of the BE MSP team.

The GREATER MSP Partnership has a vision for this region to lead the world in inclusive economic growth. Including all races and ethnicities in the economic opportunity of Minneapolis-Saint Paul is central to this vision and it is a building block of the region’s economic strategy.

We firmly believe that listening to the voices of communities of color is critical to our ability to respond as a region with action. The truth can be hard to hear, and changing long-standing systems is difficult. But if we want different results in our organizations and in this region on racial inclusion, we need to innovate and adapt. As leaders, we need to be open to new ideas and recognize that the answers will come from many individuals in our organizations – often not those at the top.

Many organizations have long worked towards improving diversity, equity, and inclusion across MSP, and the work of BE MSP is focused on elevating and empowering their efforts. To do so, we need each and every one of you to be a part of building a better, more inclusive region. Together we will create an economy and community where everyone can come, stay and thrive.

In Partnership,
Peter Frosch
CEO, GREATER MSP Partnership

ABOUT MAKE IT. MSP.

Make It. MSP partners set an ambitious goal to make the MSP region one of the country’s Top 10 performers at attracting and retaining talent. This requires a sustained effort to examine the region’s current performance and to align organizations around collective actions.

Make It. MSP’s four teams were built to power strategic areas of focus for the initiative. These include attracting technology talent (MSP Tech), inclusively welcoming newcomers (MSP Hello), attracting and retaining recent graduates to the region (MSP Campus), and retaining professionals of color (BE MSP). No one team exists independent of the other, and overlapping challenges and opportunities are explored in previous additions of the Make It. MSP. Insights report. Learn more at makeitmsp.org.
Gaps in retention persist

RETENTION MUST IMPROVE AS THE REGION GROWS MORE DIVERSE
We acknowledge and celebrate that there are many dimensions to diversity. For the purposes of this report, we specifically examine the population of color in MSP, as defined by those who self-identify through federal data as Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic (non-White), Two or More Races, and American Indian.

When it comes to migration into and out of MSP, the region has improved its performance in recent years among all people, including both white populations and people of color. However, among highly educated people of color, the region was performing worse. Today, much greater improvement is needed.

Consider the following changes in the domestic net migration of people into and out of the region in recent years. We examine performance in multi-year increments to account for significant year-to-year swings.

Now consider the difference when looking specifically at people with a bachelor’s degree or higher. The disparity is what drove the Make It. MSP. initiative to prioritize the retention of professionals of color.

Closing this gap is made all the more important by the rapidly shifting demographics of the region, in which people of color comprise a growing share of the overall population and account for an even higher share of the region’s new labor force.

Net migration performance is compiled using analysis of American Community Survey data. Data is presented as an annual average over multi-year increments to more accurately communicate trends. Data focuses on U.S. domestic migration among all working-age adults, ages 23+. Analysis performed by Minnesota Compass.
Survey respondents call for more direct action

BACKGROUND ON THE BE MSP SURVEY
On two occasions, Make It. MSP. partners have leveraged their cross-sector network to survey people of color. This network of employers, professional associations, and community organizations allowed for the organic capture of responses but also produced a heavy sample among certain demographics including highly educated populations.

The 2019 BE MSP survey differed in size and scope from the 2016 version. The new survey was shorter and built on issues raised in 2016. Both surveys are representative of populations of color and provide clear data points on their perceptions and experiences. Most themes and issues remained prevalent, underscoring that much more needs to be done to make the region more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

The 2019 survey asked people of color to provide additional ideas and solutions to the issues raised during 2016, as well as point to specific examples of things that are working or did not work in order to inspire action.

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

- **555** TOTAL SURVEY RESPONDENTS
- Roughly **50%** MARRIED AND/OR HAVE CHILDREN
- **65%** RELOCATED FROM OUTSIDE MN
- **38** AVERAGE AGE*
- **37%** IDENTIFIED AS BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN* (Asian at #2 with 25%)
- **42%** HELD A 4-YEAR/BACHELOR’S DEGREE and 46% held a Masters degree or higher

“Of those who chose to report their age and/or race/ethnicity

MAJOR ISSUES REMAIN PREVALENT ACROSS MSP
The 2019 BE MSP survey dug deeper into the key themes raised in 2016. While the region experienced improvements in retention over the past three years, the underlying issues remain prevalent. In some instances, an even higher share of respondents reported experiencing these challenges now than in the 2016 survey.

Nearly one-third of survey respondents said they are likely or extremely likely to leave MSP in the next 3-5 years. However, that number climbs to 49% among black/African American survey respondents. Top reasons for a potential relocation that were cited in the 2019 survey included the lack of diversity and cultural awareness along with weather. Job opportunities continue to be the top reason people of color report moving into the region.

KEY ISSUE BREAKDOWN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISSATISFACTION WITH QUALITY &amp; QUANTITY OF CULTURALLY-RELEVANT SPACES, EVENTS AND AMENITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>53%</strong> IN 2019 SURVEY (QUALITY)</td>
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<td><strong>59%</strong> IN 2019 SURVEY (QUANTITY)</td>
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<td><strong>43%</strong> IN 2016 SURVEY (QUALITY &amp; QUANTITY)</td>
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<th>SEE DIVERSITY REFLECTED IN LEADERSHIP TEAM</th>
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<td><strong>30%</strong> IN 2019 SURVEY</td>
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<td><strong>35%</strong> IN 2016 SURVEY</td>
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<th>SEE A PATH FOR DIVERSE PEOPLE TO ADVANCE IN THEIR ORGANIZATION</th>
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<th>FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONNECT</th>
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<td><strong>40%</strong> IN 2019 SURVEY</td>
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<td><strong>50%</strong> IN 2016 SURVEY</td>
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“The region has a story to tell about its progressivism. But the outcomes and data don’t match that perception. The cognitive dissonance of being both the best and worst place to live for certain people is noticeable from a mile away.” - 2019 survey respondent
**Solutions for change**

**INTENTION TO IMPACT IN DEI EFFORTS**
The majority of BE MSP survey respondents agree that their workplace invests in DEI support, but that number was lower among the 2019 sample.

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**PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THEIR WORKPLACE INVESTS IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION SUPPORT**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>71%</td>
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In a continuing theme, fewer respondents report that these investments are making significant impact. However, people of color identified actions that help make impact:

1. Set measurable goals and enforce for accountability
2. Offer practical tips and tools with expectations that they be used
3. Provide transparency on how goals are developed and supported

“I’d like to see commitment to specific goals that can be measured and evaluated. Even if we don’t always achieve them, publicly measuring them will change behavior.” - 2019 survey respondent

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**EXPLICITLY RAISING BIAS & DISCRIMINATION**

In 2016, survey responses revealed that experiences of bias and discrimination often occur beneath the surface.

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**PEOPLE WHO OCCASIONALLY OR FREQUENTLY EXPERIENCE BIAS & DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>60%</td>
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The 2019 BE MSP survey broke that apart. Respondents said solutions would include recognizing and accounting for experiences such as:

1. People of color feeling as though their cultural differences are viewed as “other” or “exotic”
2. Either implicitly or explicitly being asked to represent one’s culture (“tokenism”)
3. Feeling isolated or unseen as a person of color, or feeling constant surveillance in public spaces (e.g. while shopping)
4. Not acknowledging the region’s large racial disparities
5. Offering an experience that differs from one exclusive “Minnesotan” culture

**THE LITTLE THINGS ADD UP**
A strong echo across both spaces were the experiences of persistent, injurious microaggressions. Experienced over time, many microaggressions have an exhausting impact on people of color. However, when microaggressions are called out by people of color, they are often met with “it’s not that big of a deal” or “that was not the intent” dismissals – a practice that inevitably leads to more silence from people of color and less progress.

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**BRINGING ONE’S FULL SELF TO WORK**

With the majority of survey respondents reporting that they do not see diversity reflected in leadership or advancing in the organization, it follows that many believe they need to constantly monitor their speech, behavior, and appearance at work.

According to survey respondents, solutions would include employees feeling empowered to:

1. Wear clothing and hairstyles as they please without having to conform to the white lens of “professionalism”
2. Talk freely about their experiences as people of color inside and outside of the workplace
3. Speak and present authentically without fear of consequence for challenging the status quo

“Bringing my whole self means knowing that there’s power in what I uniquely have to offer and I do not have to change my speech, dress, customs, etc. in order to be effective at my job.” - 2019 survey respondent

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**BUILDING MORE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS & SPACES TO CONNECT**

All Make It. MSP. surveys have revealed that feeling connected to people is a critical retention factor. That is especially true for people of color, who report difficulties breaking in, accessing culturally specific amenities, and more.

Respondents of the BE MSP survey described places where they were making meaningful connections. Solutions could include:

- Faith-based organizations and networks
- Fraternity, sorority, and professional organizations by and for people of color
- Meetups and networking events with a diverse range of attendees
- Connections to other parents through children
- Activity-based and culturally-based community groups
Applying learnings & strengthening solutions

The past three years have provided significant learnings for the BE MSP team of Make It. MSP. The team has seen successes and challenges. By creating a safe space and consistent platform, we aim to build on the strengths of existing partners and DEI professionals. Here, you can track how the team has taken action, learned, and is refocusing its efforts.

LACK OF CULTURAL AMENITIES

- **2016 FINDING** | Almost half of survey respondents shared that they are dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of culturally relevant events and activities/amenities (e.g. food, clothing, hair salons).
- **ACTION** | BE MSP team launched the development of a Cultural Amenities Guide.
- **LEARNING** | No single guide could be complete nor comprehensive of all cultural amenities in MSP.
- **2019 REFOCUS** | Reframed the guide as a magazine format with opportunities to produce additional snapshots of the region's resources for people of color.

DIFFICULTY MAKING CONNECTIONS

- **2016 FINDING** | Half of survey respondents find it difficult to connect with new people outside of co-workers.
- **ACTION** | Organized a series of signature events for people of color across the region.
- **LEARNING** | BE MSP events are stronger when co-organized with existing organizations that are better able to connect with the communities they serve.
- **2019 REFOCUS** | Focus efforts on co-organizing quarterly MSP Mingle events and promoting other partner events for people of color across the region.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

- **2016 FINDING** | Nearly half of survey respondents say there is a lack of cultural competence in the workplace, weakening the current diversity and inclusion efforts.
- **ACTION** | Creation of the BE MSP Workplace Inclusion Toolkit
- **LEARNING** | Effective group facilitation using the Toolkit would require peer examples and understanding of the challenges people face when using the toolkit.
- **2019 REFOCUS** | Added how-to webinars, peer resources, and integrated ADA standards throughout the toolkit.

CHALLENGES ADVANCING AS A PROFESSIONAL

- **2016 FINDING** | Only half of survey respondents agree that they see a path for diverse people to advance in their organization.
- **ACTION** | Create a program that connects people of color to professional associations by promoting their work and value.
- **LEARNING** | Professional associations face unique challenges and opportunities to growing and elevating their work.
- **2019 REFOCUS** | Launched an insight gathering process to better understand the needs of professional associations and position BE MSP to better support their needs.

SPOTLIGHT: WORKPLACE INCLUSION TOOLKIT EXPANDS IMPACT

One of the team’s priorities for 2019 was to complete a comprehensive update to the Workplace Inclusion Toolkit based on feedback from partners who had used the resource in their own organizations. Improvements to make the program more accessible for blind and deaf communities, the creation of additional resources for facilitators, and an enhanced effort to track and report user patterns within the platform were key to efforts in 2019.

In 2020, the Workplace Inclusion Toolkit’s impact will also expand to neighboring regions as a licensed product of Make It. MSP. People and teams tend to engage more frequently with resources they have purchased or invested in, and the BE MSP team recognized adding a small cost to access the toolkit could have a significant impact on the rate of completion while providing an opportunity to promote the work of this community across the U.S. Learn more and access the toolkit at makeitmsp.teachable.com.
Elevating, amplifying, and connecting regional DEI efforts

BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE TEAM

BE MSP BRAND
“+” icon symbolizing the ways diversity adds to workplace, community, and regional culture

“BE” highlighting that people of color are not only welcome in MSP, they belong

BE MSP section of the Make It. MSP. website housing resources for people of color and highlighting their stories

BE MSP CO-PARTNERS
Co-produce MSP Mingle Events, monthly BE MSP Newsletter, and BE MSP brand strategy

mplschamber.com  saintpaulchamber.com

REGIONAL DEI COLLABORATOR SPOTLIGHT
Help guide regional strategies to further the work of DEI across Greater MSP

forumworkplaceinclusion.org

BUILDING ON THE WORK OF REGIONAL LEADERS

There is no silver bullet to DEI strategies, and there never will be. This is lifelong work. There are, however, many individuals and organizations deploying solutions across the region that continue to render real, positive results. BE MSP was formed as a platform to bring those individuals and organizations together.

At its core, the creation of the BE MSP team was motivated by a need to not only consider professionals of color as part of MSP’s talent attraction and retention efforts, but to make it a critical focus of the initiative. The team is made up of employers, local chambers of commerce, professional associations, philanthropic organizations, and higher education leaders, all of whom are invested in crafting a strategy for better retaining people of color to the MSP region.

Today, the BE MSP team believes that the best role we can play in the effort is to provide a safe space to test ideas, share learnings, and sustain a collective effort across the many organizations doing the work of DEI in their own communities and workplaces. Elevate the work of others. Continue to challenge assumptions.
Thank you to Make It. MSP.'s enterprise team partners:

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<tr>
<th>Best Buy</th>
<th>BlueCross BlueShield Minnesota</th>
<th>Bremer Bank</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ecolab</td>
<td>General Mills Making Food People Love</td>
<td>HealthPartners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land O'Lakes, Inc.</td>
<td>Medtronic</td>
<td>Pohlad Companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleep Number</td>
<td>Smiths Medical bringing technology to life</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCF</td>
<td>Thomson Reuters</td>
<td>Thrivent Financial</td>
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<tr>
<td>US Bank</td>
<td>Wells Fargo</td>
<td>Xcel Energy</td>
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Make It. MSP and our 200+ partners earned a Gold Award from the International Economic Development Council in 2018.