

PRSSA Powered by Submittable

Title **Minnesota PRSA**

Chapter Size 101–200

How does your Chapter define diversity, equity and inclusion?

The Minnesota Chapter is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment to all PR and communications professionals. We work with members to increase visibility of DEI standards, resources, and best practices for the following dimensions of diversity at all levels of the organization – including race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, abilities, culture, skills, and mindset.

DEI is one of the four pillars from our 2024 Strategic Planning process:

Creating vibrant, diverse and welcoming professional communities:

Minnesota PRSA values developing relationships with diverse audiences, acting in the public interest and assisting our organizations in learning to better serve all. We can only do that effectively if we are intentional about learning and advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

To help achieve this, the Minnesota PRSA DEI Officer and DEI Committee planned three signature initiatives from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025:

DEI Forum: Hosting our fifth DEI Forum in October 2024. The title of the event was Understanding Bias: Uncovering Unconscious and Confirmation Bias.

DEI Leadership Training: Offering a learning and professional development opportunity in May 2025 for diving deeper on a DEI-related topic to the Board of Directors and expanding participation in this opportunity to committee co-chairs and select PRSSA leaders. Continued monthly breakout sessions during the Board meetings to discuss DEI topics.

DEI Chats: Offering opportunities for members and event attendees to connect in small group settings to discuss DEI topics.

Does your Chapter include diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in your strategic plan?

Yes

Using the RPIE model, describe your Chapter's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and achievements during the past year. -- RESEARCH: What research did you conduct to identify opportunities to address or promote DEI by and within the Chapter?

In the period of July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, Minnesota PRSA focused on

three areas of DEI education and engagement for its membership:

- Hosting our fifth DEI Forum in October 2024. The title of the event was Understanding Bias: Uncovering Unconscious and Confirmation Bias.
- Offering a learning and professional development opportunity in May 2025 for diving deeper on a DEI-related topic to the Board of Directors and expanding participation in this opportunity to committee co-chairs and select PRSSA leaders.
- Continuing DEI Chats as an opportunity to network and discuss DEI topics in small groups. Two DEI Chats have been held during the review period (one took place in-person as part of the annual DEI Forum in October 2024 and the other was held virtually in March 2025 with the topic of Facing Challenges by Strengthening our Values and Knowledge). Two more were/are planned this year – one was held in August 2025 and one will be hosted at the Chapter's annual DEI Forum in October 2025.

The chapter used a combination of primary and secondary research for all the year's activities.

2024 DEI Forum:

Secondary research:

- Scanned the landscape of current events and reviewed common themes across thought leadership DEI articles and posts.

Primary research:

- Surveyed past DEI Forum attendees.
- Gathered anecdotal feedback from Board members, committee members, and Minnesota PRSA membership about their feelings towards DEI in that moment to develop the topic of the event.
- Identified BIPOC-owned venues, catering companies, photographers, speakers, and moderators.

Implications: The committee created a DEI Forum that was timely and relevant to the DEI issues of the moment. Based on positive reviews of the small group discussions from the 2023 DEI Forum, the DEI Committee planned to include a DEI Chat in the 2024 DEI Forum.

Continuing learning that started with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI):

Primary research:

- Gathered feedback from 2024 Minnesota PRSA Board of Directors on the success of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) in order to justify the costs for future training.
- Identified several training possibilities and presented four different options with descriptions, learning objectives, and cost to the Board of

Directors.

Implications: The committee recommended, and the Board voted, to continue learning related to the IDI through monthly breakout groups at our Board meetings and include a wider group for participation in a new training, including all new Board members, all committee co-chairs and a select group of PRSSA leaders. The Board of Directors decided to move forward with a half-day training on emotional intelligence and psychological safety offered by the BIPOC trainer and facilitator who had administered the IDI for the Board of Directors in the past so there would be consistency and prior knowledge of where many of the Board members were starting their learning.

DEI Chats:

Primary research:

- Reviewed the 2024 Minnesota PRSA strategic plan.
- Reviewed feedback from past DEI Chats events.
- Requested feedback from the Board of Directors about the Board-specific DEI Chats, small group DEI discussions among the Board as part of their commitment to regular DEI practice.
- Gathered ideas from the new committee members to explore and discuss various DEI topics for the broader Minnesota PRSA membership given the rhetoric, confusion, and concern prompted by the change in federal leadership at the end of 2024.

Implications:

- Based on feedback from previous DEI Chats, the DEI Committee also decided to include small group discussions as part of the 2024 DEI Forum event.
- For the broader membership, the DEI Committee decided to try something new for the first DEI Chat in 2025 by inviting a member of the national PRSA DEI Committee, Olga Mayoral-Wilson, to provide some insight and comments at the start of the event before the attendees broke out into small groups.
- For the Board-specific DEI Chats, based on the positive feedback, Board leadership continues to prioritize these as part of the regular agenda.

Monthly meetings dedicate approximately 15-20 minutes to a small group discussion.

PLANNING -- Goals: What did your Chapter seek to accomplish with your 2024–2025 DEI initiatives?

The goals of both the DEI Forum and DEI Chats are to educate PR and communications professionals on DEI principles, foster more inclusive

communication within our profession, and create a supportive community of communication professionals dedicated to integrating DEI in their personal and professional lives.

The goal of the new DEI training opportunity for the Board of Directors, committee co-chairs, and select PRSSA leaders was to further expand DEI knowledge within the current Board, committee, and PRSSA membership to broaden DEI understanding and start to instill DEI considerations throughout the Chapter.

PLANNING – Who was/were the target audience(s)?

The target audience for the 2024 DEI Forum was the Chapter membership located in and around the Twin Cities. The secondary audience was all public relations and communications practitioners as the event was open to the public.

The target audience for the DEI training was the 2025 Minnesota PRSA Board of Directors, committee co-chairs, and select PRSSA leadership. Secondary audiences were Chapter committees and members as the topics from the training were meant to be shared and applied throughout the Chapter's work.

The target audience for the DEI Chats was the Chapter membership. The events were also open to the public, so our secondary audience was all public relations and communications practitioners in the market.

PLANNING – What were your measurable objectives?

The objectives for the 2024 DEI Forum included:

- Attract 50 registrants, including 10 nonmembers and five students.
- Stretch the comfort zone of attendees by holding the event in north Minneapolis, an area with a large BIPOC population.
- Support diverse businesses by hiring diverse vendors for catering and venue.
- Cover the catering costs through paid registrations so we could offer our moderator and panelists an honorarium to compensate them for their time.
- Achieve 80% or higher satisfaction on post-event survey scores to measure overall attendee engagement with the event.

The objectives for the training included:

- Host an in-person training (with a virtual option for individuals not located within driving distance) for 15 Board members, 10 committee co-chairs, and four PRSSA leaders.
- Continue intercultural competence education and increase comfort discussing DEI topics by providing monthly homework for Chapter Board

members and hosting small group discussions during monthly Board meetings to share cultural differences and commonalities.

- Continue to expand intercultural competence for Board members, Chapter committee co-chairs, PRSSA leaders, and Chapter members.

The objectives of the DEI Chats included:

- Engage 50 participants in the in-person DEI Chat at the DEI Forum in October 2024.
- Engage at least 15 participants in the virtual DEI Chat in March 2025.
- Provide actionable DEI resources (links to books, podcasts, websites, etc.) for participants to use after the virtual event.

PLANNING -- Budget: What were the monetary, time and human capital investments?

The budget for the 2024 DEI Forum was \$3,000. The DEI Committee and Minnesota PRSA leadership invested 36 hours in planning and hosting the event.

The budget for the May 2025 DEI training was \$7,000. The training option the Board of Directors selected came in under budget at \$3,500. The time spent by the DEI Officer and Minnesota PRSA President researching and planning logistics for the event was 10 hours. The human capital investment spent by the Board of Directors, committee co-chairs, and PRSSA leadership was three hours per person (approximately 75 hours total). The Board of Directors human capital investment for monthly DEI homework and small group discussions is approximately one hour per month for each Board member (approximately 15 hours per month total). There is no budget for the DEI Chats. Each DEI Chat takes about 10 hours of labor for planning and hosting.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the strategies and tactics used.

The strategies for the 2024 DEI Forum were:

- Dive deeper on the types of bias in all forms and the impact on communications, decision-making, and workplace culture through a panel discussion that provided a wide range of expertise and insight.
- Provide attendees information, connections, and resources for continuing to explore DEI topics in their personal and professional lives.
- Differentiate our events from other similar events by carving out time for attendees to process what they were learning in real time through small group discussions

The tactics for the DEI Forum included:

- Creating inclusive communications and offering accommodations,

including sign language interpretation.

- Recruiting ethnically diverse and knowledgeable panelists and an engaging moderator.
- Working with diverse-owned companies on venue and food.
- Organizing small group sessions within the Forum for attendees to connect and discuss how they can apply key learnings from the event.

The strategies for the DEI training were:

- Deepening conversations of intercultural competencies to broaden understanding for diversity, equity and inclusion, and how all Chapter Board

members, committee co-chairs, and PRSSA leaders play a role in driving our ongoing DEI journey.

- Expand the knowledge of DEI topics to new Minnesota PRSA leaders on the Board of Directors, Chapter committees, and PRSSA.
- Continue conversations of intercultural competencies among the entire Board.

The tactics for the DEI training included:

- A training session led by Dr. Ramon Pastrano for all Board members, committee co-chairs, and select PRSSA leaders to explore emotional intelligence and psychological safety.
- Monthly homework for each Board member assigned by the Chapter DEI Officer.
- Monthly discussions during each Board meeting.

The strategies for the DEI Chats were:

- Use virtual breakout sessions and incorporate one or two questions for discussion per breakout to encourage active participation and engagement.
- Reach Minnesota PRSA members through member emails and targeted social media.
- Reach non-members through targeted social media from the Chapter.
- Personally invite Board members, committee members and Past Presidents to attend: 1) Board members: Strongly encourage Board members to participate as an extension of their commitment to DEI learning. 2) Members of all Chapter committees: Strongly encourage members of all our committees to participate in order to grow our Chapter's DEI knowledge. 3) Past Presidents: An invitation to extend DEI learning and a commitment to advancing the profession and the professional.
- Involve three DEI Committee members, Board members, and/or Past Presidents to help facilitate small-group discussions.
- Share questions for discussion in advance so participants can be prepared to discuss.

- Share DEI resources from National PRSA and/or local/regional/national DEI organizations after the event to keep learning momentum. These resources could be books, podcasts, websites, trainings, articles, videos and more.

The tactics for the DEI Chats were:

- Prepare interactive sessions with 1-2 questions for each breakout session and facilitate group discussion.
- For the March 2025 DEI Chat, work with National PRSA DEI Committee member Olga Mayoral-Wilson to provide insight and context to the current landscape before breaking out to discuss.
- Gather feedback to measure the impact and identify expansion of the program and areas for improvement.
- Promote the DEI Chats weekly via email marketing and on social media for at least six weeks before the event. Use hashtags - #DiverseVoices #DElinPR #InclusiveComms.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration with Minnesota PRSA partner organizations and industry groups.
- Provide attendees with a resource list post-event such as 1) link to discussed resources, 2) link to National PRSA DEI Toolkit, 3) 1-3 reputable links for further reading on DEI for communication and PR professionals.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Summary: Explain your Chapter's DEI initiatives for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.*

After DEI Committee discussions earlier in the year, planning for the 2024 DEI Forum got underway in earnest in spring 2024. This included picking a date, securing a venue, contracting with a catering company, recruiting speakers and a moderator, and contracting with an ASL interpreter. In early August, promotion for the event began and registrations opened.

Registration was open until early October, and we then held the event on October 9, 2024. Because no registrants requested ASL interpretation, we canceled the ASL interpreter we had scheduled. A post-event survey was sent to participants after the event to collect feedback.

The work to plan DEI training for the Board of Directors, committee cochairs,

and select PRSSA leaders began in January 2025 for implementation in May 2025. The Chapter DEI Officer gathered feedback to inform the direction of training for the year, researched possible training options to present to the Board of Directors, and in coordination with the Minnesota PRSA President, selected and planned the logistics for the training session. The training session was held in May 2025. Monthly

homework was (and still is) assigned for each Board member by the Chapter DEI officer and monthly DEI discussion were (and are) held during each Board meeting throughout the year.

During strategic planning sessions in late 2024, the DEI Committee decided they wanted to pursue three DEI chats in 2025, with the first being planned for March 2025 (the other two are planned to occur in August and October 2025). In early 2025, the DEI Committee selected a topic, contacted Olga Mayoral-Wilson to ask for her participation, and started promoting the event in mid-February 2025 and opened registration. The event was hosted in March 2025. A post-event survey was sent to participants after the event to collect feedback.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the elements or components, the techniques used, and the strategies and tactics undertaken, how objectives were met, and how you addressed the audience(s) you targeted.

Techniques, strategies and tactics are described above. How the programs met objectives (results) is answered in the Evaluation section.

For the DEI Forum and DEI Chats, email communications and social media posts were shared with Chapter membership to encourage registration and participation. We also highlighted the DEI Forum panelists and DEI Chats facilitators on our Chapter social media channels to highlight the diversity of expertise being shared at the event.

EVALUATION -- What were your results? Explain how the program met or exceeded its original measurement methods when available or appropriate. What worked? What was accomplished? What would you do differently?

For the 2024 DEI Forum:

- Met our goal of 50 registrants (23 were PRSA members; 25 were nonmembers; 2 were students or job seekers)
- Post-event surveys noted that attendees appreciated the accessibility of price and the location. Comments noted that attendees found the panelists knowledgeable and interesting, and people left feeling inspired.
- Most post-survey respondents indicated that the time of day, length and price of the event were just right.
- Location received an average score of 4.5 out of 5.
- Day of week received an average score of 4.4 out of 5.

Results for the DEI training included:

- 15 Board members and approximately 10 committee co-chairs and select PRSSA leaders received a three-hour presentation and interactive training

(free of charge to them) from a BIPOC trainer and facilitator (who had also administered the IDI to Board members for the past two years).

Participants also received a 45-page workbook as a takeaway for future learning.

- DEI knowledge from Board members, committee co-chairs, and PRSSA leaders began to be cascaded to committees. A former PRSSA president and a former Minnesota PRSA President joined the Chapter DEI Committee in 2025 to continue to broaden their DEI knowledge and participation.

- In its third year, monthly DEI discussions among the Board continue to be a favorite part of the Board meetings.

Results of the virtual DEI Chats included:

- 50 DEI Forum participants also participated in the DEI Chat that was part of the Forum. 32 individuals attended the March 2025 DEI Chat.

- The March 2025 DEI Chat received a 4.6 satisfaction score (out of 5.0).

Post-event surveys noted individuals were eager for more opportunities for DEI connections and discussions and appreciated the opportunity to talk with their peers in a more informal setting.

- Feedback from attendees also provided insights on questions/areas of focus for future DEI Chats.

- The success of the DEI Chats model inspired a combined mentorship event in partnership with the Minnesota PRSA Membership Committee, which occurred in August 2025.

EVALUATION – How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives impacted attitudes, beliefs or behaviors?

Minnesota PRSA's DEI initiatives prior to this year had a significant impact on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors making it easier for DEI initiatives to be approved and embraced by the Chapter Board and implemented by committees who understand the overall importance of DEI.

The DEI Forum and DEI Chats have provided Chapter members the opportunity to learn more about relevant DEI topics and apply those learnings to their personal and professional lives. This has been immensely useful for members who work in organizations who don't provide DEI specific

programming or learning opportunities.

Minnesota PRSA and its DEI leaders have frequently been sought after for local, regional and national PRSA guidance related to DEI efforts. The Chapter's 2025 Immediate Past President, Marsha Pitts-Phillips, APR, is the Immediate Past Co-Chair of the national PRSA DEI Committee and

Candee Wolf, APR, Fellow PRSA, serves as the Chair of Awards & Scholarship Committee for the national PRSA DEI Committee. At the behest of the Minnesota DEI Committee, the Minnesota Chapter's DEI Officer and Executive Committee drafted a statement in January 2025 in response to the attacks on DEI from the federal government. This undertaking prompted National PRSA's DEI Committee to work with National PRSA leadership to pull together a formal National PRSA position statement on PRSA.

EVALUATION – How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives led the communications industry in your market?

Based upon our research, no other member organization in the communications industry in Minnesota has undertaken as many DEI initiatives as Minnesota PRSA. Based on the success of the Chapter's 2024 DEI initiatives, the DEI Committee attracted three new members, one of which was a past PRSSA leader, and one was a past Minnesota PRSA President.

EVALUATION – How have your Chapter's DEI initiatives influenced membership?

DEI does not live with one person or even one committee. The leadership established the belief that DEI must be baked into the fabric of our chapter. Thanks to the work of the DEI Committee and Chapter DEI initiatives, we continue to see more intentional inclusivity in other Chapter events including the PR North event for college students, our annual Classics awards event, our regular Career Coffees, and a new mentorship program launched in 2025.

Based on the success of the Chapter's 2024 DEI initiatives, the DEI Committee attracted three new members, one of which was a past PRSSA leader, and one was a past Minnesota PRSA President.

EVALUATION – How has your Chapter established sound relationships with diverse publics and/or organizations to gain consensus or help PRSA advance diversity in the profession?

Building relationships is a gradual process. Minnesota PRSA has successfully partnered with DEI experts from various sectors across the region, enhancing the Chapter's growth. These collaborations have resulted in more robust and diverse panels, enabling the Chapter to present a wider array of professional development topics. As a result, the

Chapter's website now better reflects the diversity of its programming and leadership.

The 2025 Minnesota PRSA Board is the most diverse it has ever been, featuring its first Black Chapter Immediate Past President, two additional Black Board members, one additional Latino Board member, one additional Asian Board member, and one member of the LGBTQ+ community in addition to other factors of diversity such as age and gender. The Chapter's committee co-chairs are also the most diverse group in the Chapter's history.

EVALUATION – Next Steps: What are your future plans for DEI initiatives?

Minnesota PRSA is currently planning our sixth annual DEI forum on October 7, 2025, which will also include our third DEI Chat of the year and will continue both the DEI Forum and DEI Chats into 2026, with elements likely incorporated into the 2026 Midwest District Conference that the Minnesota Chapter will be hosting. The Chapter also plans to continue its DEI work within the Board and identify ways to broaden intercultural competence learning to Chapter members.

The Chapter was also able to implement some accessibility improvements to its website in late 2024, and there are discussions underway about doing a website refresh to further improve accessibility and functionality in 2026.