**IDEA WG Listening Session | Wednesday, October 7, 4:00-5:30 pm EST**

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Participants: 19, including 3 members of TWS council

***1)*** *Introduction to the listening session and updates, including:*

* IDEA WG name and charter update and general WG background
* Inspiration for listening session came from conversations among IDEA WG board this summer addressing accommodations
* Goal of better serving membership

***2)*** *Conversation opened to listening session attendees—what brings folks here today?*

TWS Council member—Can someone talk about where we are with DEI issues now, and where do we want to be?

* Raising awareness of barriers in our annual meeting, but what areas can we continue to improve?

TWS Council member—

* TWS council will be talking about DEI strategic plan on Friday, and want something solid w/in 6-month time period for organization unit levels
* DEI Don Yasuda chair…this year different…restructure to get voices from WGs that are relevant to DEI..want large enough to be inclusive but small enough to be effective…up to 12 members, main charges DEI initiative w/ TWS staff—long-term strategic approach

What does the group and TWS council think has worked in TWS to show diversity and inclusion at conferences and within organizational units, and what else is needed?

* What has been successful/effective?
  + Outreach/grassroots effort to build communities w/in TWS
  + TWS council member—
    - there is a general concern among members that we are not welcome to everyone, i.e. LGBTQ+; white men starting to wonder what their value is to TWS…but we are a broad diverse group and should think of and balance everyone’s perspectives
  + Federal employees—
    - the TWS WI chapter modeled Out in the Field (OiTF) by making magnets w/pledge to treat everyone equally/professional code of conduct—and encouraged participants to put in office or house. Included everyone and encouraged making commitment both at conference and at home in places of work
    - Should also always build DEI topics into plenaries and throughout conference without it necessarily being a traditional DEI training endeavor/session
    - USGS going back to core principles as a building block to create welcoming workforce; value differences

Federal employee—

* DEI events/panels sometimes preaching to the choir in terms of participants, maybe not reaching those who actually need to hear these discussions
* DEI events/panels often competing with other concurrent events at the conference, such as the plenary.

TWS council member

* coordinating efforts among the many DEI-focused groups of TWS would be beneficial
* addressed DEI strategic plan

***3)*** *Conversation topic: student or state chapter local level success stories*

* Importance of student retention in TWS, but student chapter advisors play a large role to make sure students feel welcome
* Student—Virginia Tech TWS has mentorship program w/upper and lower classmen and has been successful
  + talked about expanding to state chapters
  + coordinating speakers and having them incorporate LGBTQ+ experience in their talks

***4)*** *Mentorship*

* ECPWG—Mentorship for Life program will receive funding and will be implemented in 2021.
  + There was (and still is?) a previous mentorship program but no facilitation
  + Process will be formalized soon through mentorship subcommittee of council
  + Paul DiSalvo runs program; email: [pdisalvo25@gmail.com](mailto:pdisalvo25@gmail.com)
  + Potential for another listening session about mentorship?
* Western section mentorship example—match interests, similar to leadership institute

***5)*** *Canadian section discussion*

* How to engage leadership from Canadian section?
* Need for inclusive membership that is welcome to everyone
* Recruitment of under-represented groups/members vs working with current membership
  + Work on existing culture within current membership;” do homework” to make TWS welcoming and inclusive and allow retention

***6)*** *Conference planning*

* Federal employee asked: What is the current process for picking cities and dates for TWS conferences? What feedback has council received on some of these decisions?
  + TWS council members—
    - Spokane location already selected for 2022
    - Selecting dates is usually complicated with competing dates, such as national/religious holidays
    - Potential for article that explains what goes into conference planning to increase transparency to TWS members
    - Often, the negotiation process for selecting conference location is about money
    - Suggested a possible idea of rotating conference among a select few venues (3?) instead of choosing a new city every year
    - This is incredibly complex
    - Members just want to know that these factors are considered and what the process is when deliberating choices
    - Be upfront and transparent about the process and how it was chosen and then focus on finding accommodations for that conference/city
    - Meeting dates sometimes overlapping Yom Kippur/Halloween? —suggested creating list of dates of important/dates to consider—role of IDEAWG to play in creating this list?
    - Success of virtual conference—multiple conferences, potential for hybrid models in future
    - Objection over NC meeting because of “bathroom bill”; Louisville meeting—it’s complex. Punishing cities and states…
    - Are there tools or metrics to evaluate LGBTQ+ friendliness?
      * Federal employee suggested Human Rights Campaign (HRC) tools
    - Budget implications for discount to state employees? We need to think creatively about this

***7)*** *TWS council members left call; conversation opened to other concerns and discussion*

* encourage TWS to continue some sort of virtual format or hybrid format even with in-person conferences moving forward
  + Financial and/or safety concerns—alleviate by providing virtual format regardless?
* Future conference planning should get members involved in planning conferences
  + Local ambassadors? State chapters, section members?
* Hybrid option – IDEAWG support?
  + Undergrads benefit too from the hybrid model; potential for reduced cost for hybrid-only attendees; socioeconomic barriers
  + IDEAWG could support or send out emails about rideshare, sharing hotel rooms/AirBnB, etc.
* Can some DEI content (i.e. panels/sessions) be available to all members?
  + Post on IDEAWG or OITF page?
* Proprietary rights for talks? If nothing else, can we point people to personal websites or third-party platforms even if TWS can’t host it legally – check with Cameron?
* Scholarships for under-represented folks through IDEA WG?
* Concern: job panels repeat same stories
  + Wildlife Vocalizations recommendation
    - First need to identify those people
  + Untold stories symposium suggestion