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Andrew Hoffman

How Do We Get There? EDF Manages a New Diversity Plan

Environments are destroyed when markets fail to protect them. EDF and our allies help design markets that protect rather than destroy.

—Dr. Frank Convery, Chief Economist at EDF

The truth is that environmental groups have done a miserable job of reaching out to minorities.¹

—Fred Krupp, former Executive Director of EDF

Emily Reyna, Director of Diversity at the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), focused on the screen at the organization's headquarters in New York City. She had been in the newly formed position for just over a year and was urgently finalizing a presentation to the board of directors as traffic hummed on the street below. EDF's most current strategic plan outlined diversity as a key focus for the organization, and its Diversity Strategies and Recommendations were a direct product of the organization-wide strategy. At the end of year one of the plan, Reyna was in New York to report back to the board about both the progress and the challenges of taking a newly-drafted initiative from strategic plan into concrete, measurable action.

EDF was one of the largest and most influential nonprofits in the environmental space. It had shown a pragmatic, market-based approach could succeed in moving the needle on urgent environmental challenges across the United States and internationally. Yet the organization, from junior staff through senior leadership, as well as its outside partnerships, did not represent the shifting demographics of the United States, even though studies had shown that minorities supported higher levels of spending on the environment than whites.² Reyna had served on EDF's internal diversity committee for several years prior to the adoption of the Strategies and Recommendations, and she saw this evident differential as a risk to securing meaningful and durable solutions, which were a core focus of EDF's mission.

Making these changes was not easy. Reyna scanned through the last of her slides and straightened her collar. As she read through Next Steps, she toiled with some knotty questions: How would EDF balance its core mission with making strategic moves toward diversity in a genuine way? What did success look like and what were the metrics? As a staff of one, did she have the capacity to make progress? Was EDF keeping

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