# 2021 NASPEs AWARD
## Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination
### *Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

Additionally, please attach a one-page summary of the program and prepare a narrative answer for the questions listed below. Do not send supporting documentation. Provide a narrative answer for each of the following questions.

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## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Title: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion                State: CO

Contact Person: Kara Veitch

Contact's Title: Executive Director        Agency: Department of Personnel & Administration

Mailing Address: 1525 Sherman St, Denver, CO 80203

Telephone: 303-866-6559        Fax: n/a

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## NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Kara Veitch        Title: Executive Director

State: CO                Agency: Department of Personnel & Administration

Telephone: 303-866-6559        Fax: n/a

E-mail: kara.veitch@state.co.us

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**ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST**:
Meet all eligibility requirements.  •  Meet deadline requirements stated on the NASPE website.  •  Be entered in the correct category and be correctly identified.  •  Include a complete nomination packet.  •  Conform to all copyright laws.

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## Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination
### *Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

## DETAILS

1.  Please provide a brief description of this program.

Through collaborative efforts, the State developed a comprehensive Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) program that aims to implement nondiscriminatory practices and provide equitable opportunities for employment and advancement in all of our departments, programs, services, and worksites. Through policy, executive action, and innovative communication strategy, the State of Colorado and all agencies across the state are committed to creating a Colorado For All.

2.  How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

This program has been operational since March 2019.

3.  Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

In November 2019, the Department of Personnel & Administration (DPA) held listening sessions across state agencies to provide feedback on how the State can become an employer of choice. Among other things, employees voiced concern over discrimination at work. As part of the State's Employer of Choice (EOC) initiative, DPA identified equity, diversity, and inclusion as a focus area in the EOC strategic plan and created this EDI program. This program was further advanced through an Executive Order signed by Gov. Jared Polis in August 2020 directing DPA to lead State action on equity, diversity, and inclusion across state government. The Executive Order includes an EDI Universal Policy with accessibility requirements, updates to hiring guidelines, as well as mandatory training for employees, supervisors, and executive leaders.

4.  Why is this program a new and creative method?

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Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination
*Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

This program is unique in that it is applied to every strand of Colorado's state government.

Though some states enforce EDI practices through an EDI-designated office, the State of

Colorado took a decentralized, statewide action through an Executive Order and Universal

Policy, which set the vision and parameters for the initiatives; allowing and supporting agencies

in developing plans that best fit their cultures and missions; utilizing feedback from employees

to design the EDI initiatives through a quarterly pulse survey of employees; creating

accountability by presenting plans and progress reports to the legislature, public, and state

employees; providing centralized training for employees; and convening an EDI cabinet to assist

and share best practices.

5.  What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for

    this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and

    staff already in place.)

 The State was able to establish the EDI initiative through existing resources.

6.  What are the program's operational costs?

 $15,000 was spent for development of online EDI modules, and there were some peripheral

costs for participation in community events. All other content development work has been

done in house utilizing expertise from cross functional, multi-agency teams. Generally, the

directives to agencies in the EO have been absorbable. Some depts have reallocated funds to

hire EDI officers, hire consulting services, or otherwise support EDI initiatives. Several agencies

are now including EDI initiatives in upcoming decision items with the legislature to support

larger EDI-related initiatives such as accessibility. Moving forward, EDI initiatives will require dedicated funding to hire personnel focused on these efforts statewide.

7.  How is this program funded?

 n/a

8.  Did this program originate in your state? ☐            ☒

9.  Are you aware of similar programs in other states? ☒            ☐
    If yes, how does this program differ?

The State of Arizona has an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion office that works directly with the Department of Education to ensure Arizona's students and teachers are served equitably. The Governor's Office of Community Service at the State of Montana issued a short statement on EDI, but didn't have a similar EDI program to the State of Colorado. The State of Colorado's EDI initiative requires collaboration between agencies and the Governor's Office. This program administers action on all levels and holds employees, executive leaders, and agencies accountable, thus resulting in measurable change.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

The State developed an anonymous quarterly pulse survey that provides a snapshot for state agencies to see where they need to improve as employers to ensure all employees feel engaged, valued, and self-assured in bringing their true selves to work. Results from this survey are used by the Governor's Office and leaders across the State to measure progress on a quarterly, ongoing basis to inform future efforts. In conjunction with the Executive Order and Universal Policy, an EDI cabinet was formed, comprising of Executive Directors and leaders from state agencies. EDI cabinet members meet regularly to share best practices, discuss pulse

survey results, identify root causes of problems they are seeing, and serve as a sounding board for DPA in the development of statewide EDI training, standards, and competencies. Each Executive Director is required to provide an annual EDI report to the Governor's Office and DPA. These reports identify the efforts that they are making and the goals they are setting around hiring practices, procurement, and community engagement.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The formation of the Colorado Equity Alliance helped spearhead the development of the State of Colorado's EDI program. After a few years of development, the Executive Order was signed and the EDI Universal Policy was deployed. Since then, new policies, strategies, and discourse surrounding EDI went into effect, and leadership across agencies worked together with the Governor's Office to evaluate the progress since the program's inception. In addition to the policy and structural changes that have been made, agencies' community engagement efforts have noticeably increased. Many agencies began conducting open discussions with their employees and community leaders. A few have launched focus groups and surveys. The Colorado Equity Alliance found that, by July 2020, there was an increase in cross-agency collaboration. These EDI efforts are fundamentally changing the way state government operates in Colorado. State agencies are required to submit performance plans each year with up to four "Wildly Important Goals (WIGs)" for the agency to focus on over the year. These also include lead measures the agency must surpass to achieve these goals. For Fiscal Year 22, state agencies have proposed 11 WIGs and 37 related lead measures relating to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

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**The State of Colorado Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Program Summary**

In November 2019, the Department of Personnel & Administration (DPA) held 45 listening sessions with state employees to garner feedback on how the state can become an employer of choice. Employees identified discrimination as a problem facing the state. The Department took employee input and created its State's Employer of Choice (EOC) initiative, which includes equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as a focus area in the EOC strategic plan. In 2019, the State developed a comprehensive EDI program aimed at implementing inclusive practices and providing equitable opportunities for employment and advancement in all state's departments, programs, services, and worksites. In August 2020, Gov. Jared Polis signed an Executive Order directing the DPA to lead state actions on EDI. The Executive Order included a directive to author an EDI Universal Policy, new standards for accessibility, guidelines for more equitable procurement processes, updates to hiring practices, as well as mandatory training for employees, supervisors, and executive leaders. Each agency in the executive branch was charged to create an annual EDI plan that focuses on both creating welcoming, inclusive spaces for their employees and applying an equity lens to their operational work serving the residents of Colorado.

DPA developed an anonymous quarterly pulse survey of State employees to gauge how the State is doing regarding EDI efforts across all agencies. Results from this survey are used by the Governor's Office and leaders across state government to measure progress on an ongoing basis to inform future efforts. Also, an EDI cabinet was formed, composed of Executive Directors and leaders from agencies who meet regularly to share best practices, discuss pulse survey results, and identify root causes and possible solutions to challenges discovered as part of this continued dialogue with employees, leaders, and the communities they serve.