



2021 NASPEs

Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

CMS Conversations



2021 NASPEs AWARD

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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 provide the project initiative in one of the following formats:

<https://ilgov.sharepoint.com/sites/CMSPortal/CMSUniversity/SitePages/CMS-Conversation-Corner.aspx>
(CMS will give access to any judging member that would need it, is it is an internal site.)

NOMINATION INFORMATION

Title of Nomination: CMS Conversations

State: IL

Contact Person: Anthony Pascente

Contact's Title: Chief of Staff

Agency: Department of Central Management Services (CMS)

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Telephone: (312) 814-5259 Fax: N/A

E-mail: Anthony.Pascente@Illinois.gov

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Sarah Kerley

Title: Chief Administrative Officer

State: IL

Agency: Department of Central Management Services

Telephone: (312) 718-1317 Fax: N/A

E-mail: Sarah.Kerley@Illinois.gov

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DETAILS

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.



In June of 2020, **CMS University** launched a new offering called **CMS Conversations** to help encourage and drive difficult conversations around race. **CMS Conversations** is based on the **CMS University** platform and is designed to provide access for all CMS employees to important resources on subjects of racial discrimination, diversity, and inclusion.

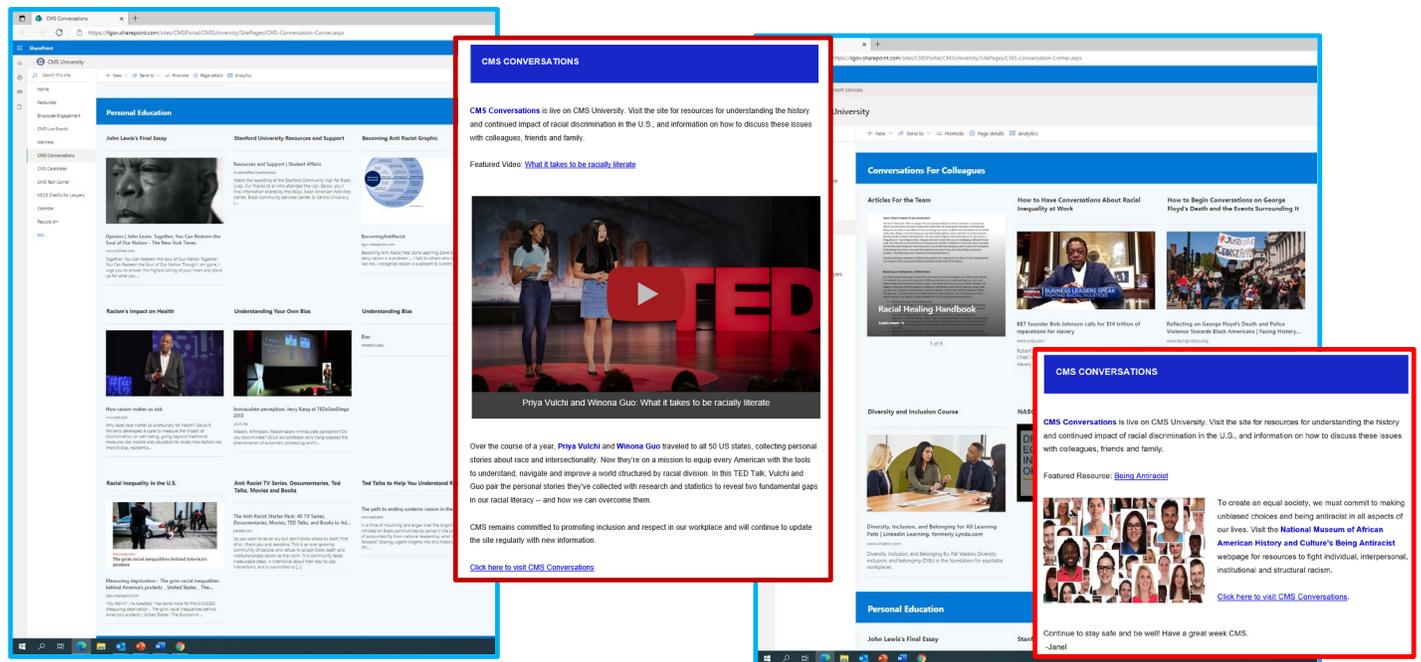
The objective is to arm employees with a knowledge base around issues for which they may not have ever inquired and to help managers initiate important conversations with their teams on these subjects and provide a safe space for employees to discuss and learn about issues and behaviors.

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

June 2020. Director Janel Forde used her weekly message on June 15, 2020, to share the launch program.

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

Following the death of George Floyd in late May 2020 and the accompanying unrest across the country refocused attention on questions of social justice and racism, CMS launched **CMS Conversations** to provide resources to employees and a place to have safe and courageous learning and dialogue.



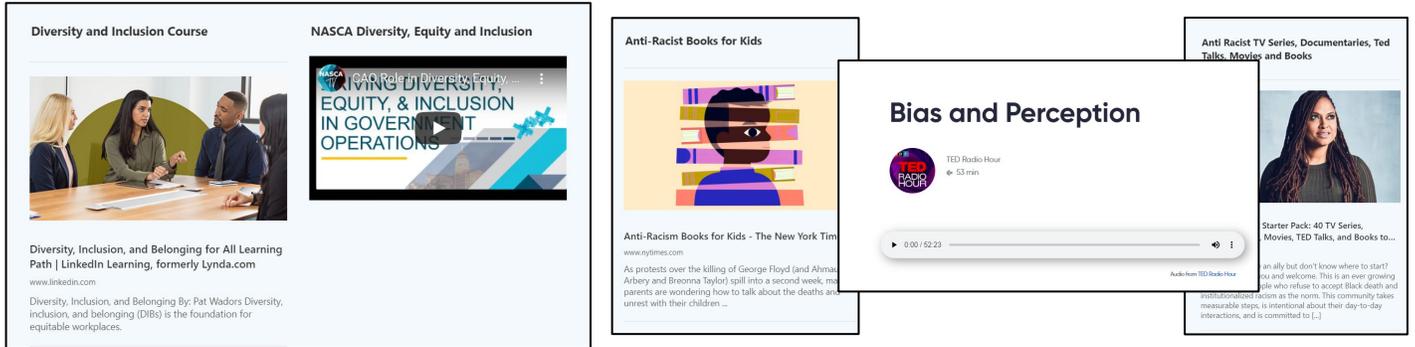
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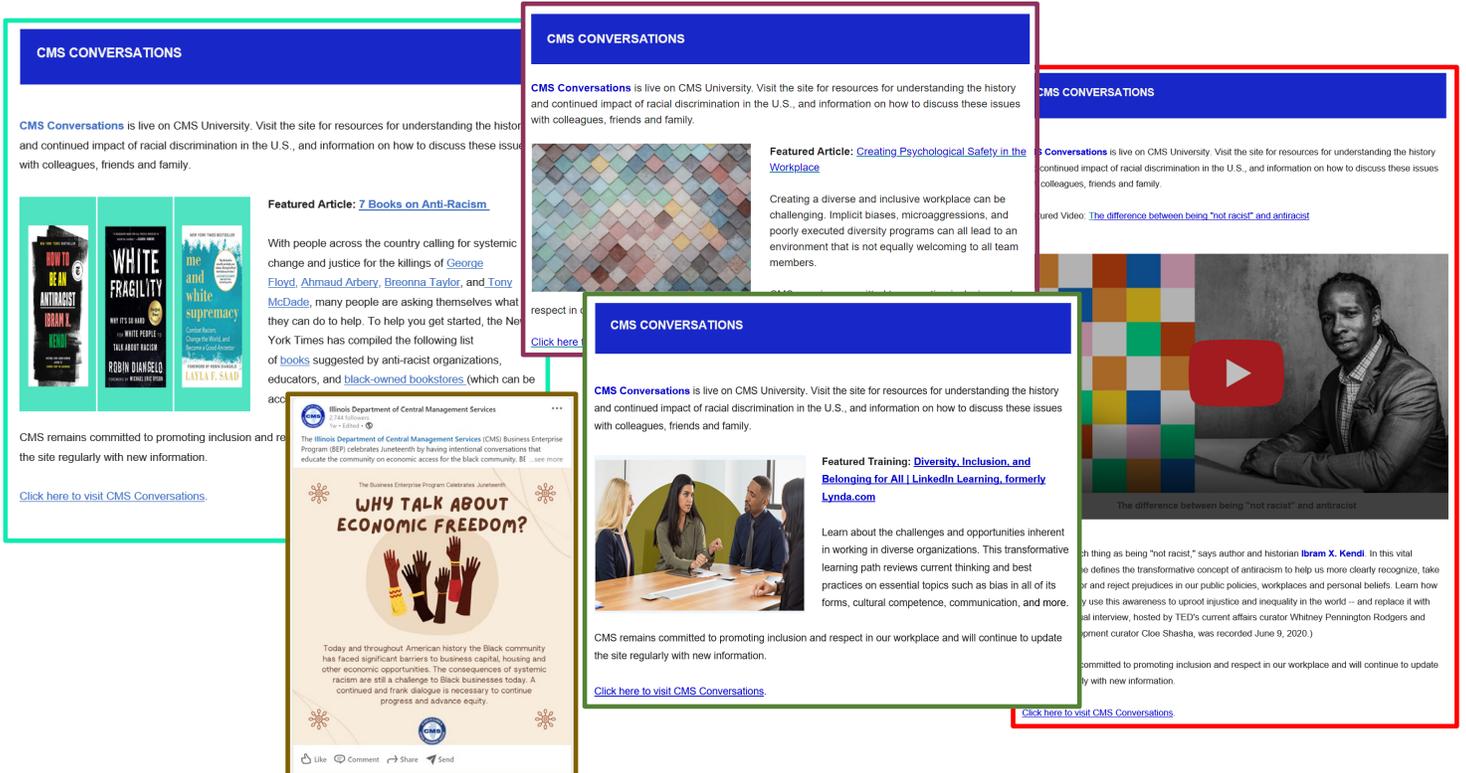
4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

Training websites and employee resources are nothing new. However, CMS created a space tackling the most hot-button, potentially divisive topics and made it accessible to all employees regardless of their level of exposure or understanding around questions of the day.

Instead of *directing* training, through this program, CMS provides frameworks and guides for employees to self-direct and to learn and engage from a plethora of different angles.



CMS Conversations meets employees right where they are and invites them to arm themselves with knowledge to help lead to a more inclusive workplace and a more just world. If you are a podcaster, there were podcasts for you. TV buffs have a whole host of series to watch. If you are a concerned parent, there are resources about talking to your kids about racism.



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5. What was the program's start-up 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.)

Time was of the essence, so employees moved quickly to set up the site within CMS's larger professional development platform ([CMS University](#)). That said, the start-up cost was limited to staffing hours over a two-week period.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

The operating costs are minimal. Staff upload additional content as it is available. Otherwise, there is no ongoing cost to maintaining [CMS Conversations](#).

7. How is this program funded?

The initial build of the site as well as ongoing maintenance were/are performed by existing staff.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes. While other States certainly wrestled with the question of how to help employees address the social injustice issues facing America, [CMS Conversations](#) was the brainchild of CMS leadership, specifically Director Janel Forde and Bureau Chief for Illinois Office of Communication and Information Marjani Williams.

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

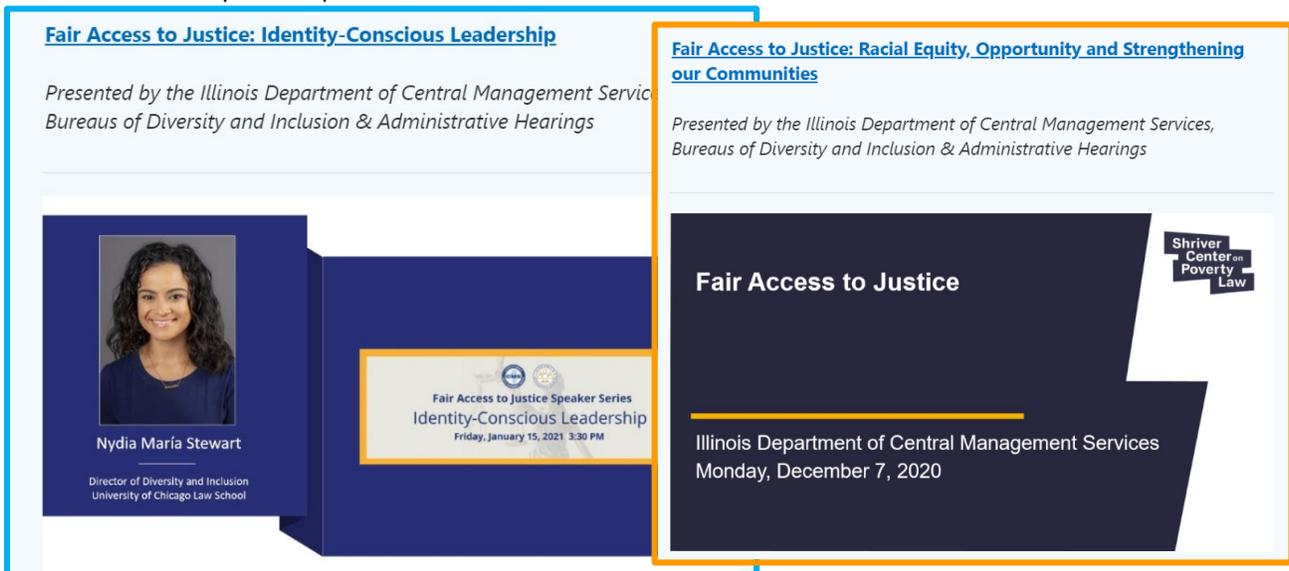
We are not aware of any other states' implementation of this kind of approach, programming, or content. To that point, we were asked by the [National Association of State Chief Administrators \(NASCA\)](#) and various peer states, to share our content and expertise, demonstrating the transferability of such an approach.

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

Measuring the success of a program designed to prompt internal reflection and growth which plays out in a more inclusive workplace and world is difficult. However, the very existence of such a place to learn, address challenges, and actively become part of the solution is in and of itself a success. Employees who may have felt unseen or under-recognized, saw CMS facing racism head on, putting resources behind its commitment to be an anti-racist workplace.

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

[CMS Conversations](#) continues to evolve, as CMS carries out its mission to integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles throughout the agency. For example, the Bureau of Administrative Hearings, which has historically conducted training for attorneys and other practitioners of administrative law in the state, joined with other CMS leaders and external experts to present a [Fair Access to Justice series](#).



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The **Fair Access to Justice series** is available on **CMS Conversations**, as it supports the goal of bringing equity issues to the forefront for State employees while bringing new perspectives from partner organizations and other stakeholders. These discussions provide a tangible resource for employees who have learned about the importance of allyship and want to put these lessons into practice to make a direct impact through their day-to-day work.

Additional examples of CMS' internal and external conversations



Good Morning CMS,

When we got the news last week, that **Breonna Taylor** would not receive justice for her murder, many of us were forced to relive a far too familiar pain and disappointment.

Unfortunately, this type of tragedy is and has been the reality for far too many people of color and particularly Black men, women and children throughout the history of America. Many of us are hurt, disappointed, frustrated and angry. **I hear you and I understand.**

“

We tell them that there are many of us who are working day in and day out to change the systems that are rooted in systemic racism.

”

Office of Lt. Governor
Juliana Stratton

So, what do we say to our children when they ask how many more? I recognize that these discussions are never easy and I echo Lt. Governor Stratton in her response – **“We tell them that there are many of us who are working day in and day out to change the systems that are rooted in systemic racism.”**

It is up to us to build a culture of equity and respect in our communities and workspaces, to ensure that we're working towards a better future for our families, friends, and the people we serve everyday.

I encourage you all to visit [CMS Conversations](#) for anti-racism resources to help you and your family learn more about how to address racism and bias.

Please remember, we do this work, all of this work **together**.

Let's continue to be respectful, kind and compassionate to one another.

Please see also below for a video message from me.



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Join the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) Business Enterprise Program (BEP) on Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 2pm for a discussion in recognition of Asian American/Pacific Islander Month and Small Business ...see more

**#AAPISTRONG
SMALL BUSINESS MONTH
EQUITY AND INCLUSION EVENT**

JOIN THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM (BEP) FOR A CONVERSATION ON HOW ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER-OWNED (AAPI) BUSINESSES ARE SUPPORTING THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND HOW LEADERS IN ILLINOIS ARE PROMOTING EQUITY.

THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2021 | 2PM

Dr. Karen Eng, President/CEO, CMS
Aihua Lang, Board President, Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago
Demaris Mondoro, Executive Director, Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA)
Teresa Cing, Owner, Sugar Bliss
Aniella Johnson, Deputy Director, Business Enterprise Program

2 Comments

Add a comment. Type @ to mention someone

June 24, 2020
This is epic information. I never would have imagined CMS to be ever so bold!

June 15, 2020
This is excellent information and a excellent idea. The dialogue needs to begin to address deep imbedded institutional racism. People often mistake bigotry and prejudice for racism. Prejudice is a preconceived notion that is not based on reason or actual experience. A bigot is a person who is obstinately or intolerantly devoted to their own...

Colleague feedback



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Thank you to **State of Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, Esq.** Stratton, **Veronica Hallaway** from the **Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)** of Public Health, **Dr. Heather Prendergast** from the **University of Illinois Chicago**, and **Dr. Lee Washington** from **Aetna** for joining **Director Janel Forde**, the **Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS)**, and **Be Well Illinois** today for our session on Exploring Disparities in Black Heart Health. This event was hosted in recognition of Black History Month and Heart Health Awareness Month and kicked off a series of conversations on health equity.

If you missed today's session, visit https://lnkd.in/e_gXQAR to access the recording.

#ILCMS #CMS #BeWellIllinois #CMSCelebrates #BlackHistoryMonth #UIC #Aetna #IDPH

CMS CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) and **Be Well Illinois** present:

Exploring Disparities in Black Heart Health

FEATURED SPEAKERS

34

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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