

# Firm Helping Wisconsin Communities Respond to Calls for Greater Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity (DEI)

*Brookfield Firm Guiding Communities Through Action-Focused Process of Greater Inclusivity*

BROOKFIELD, WI, USA, October 4, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A Brookfield, Wisconsin, firm is using its expertise in organizational development for municipalities to help Wisconsin communities embrace greater diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI).



Organization Development Consultants, Inc.

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*Dr. Daniel Schroeder*

“Communities of all sizes and demographics are being challenged to proactively foster diversity, equity and inclusion,” said Dr. Daniel Schroeder, president/CEO of [Organization Development Consultants, Inc. \(ODC\)](#) in Brookfield. “They know it’s a step they need to take, but they often wonder how to engage a process that will lead to meaningful results.”

Based on their previous experience with ODC on other efforts to build stronger communities, they are now seeking ODC’s help in responding to calls to address DEI concerns, Schroeder said.

The City of Burlington already has worked with ODC to start the process, after residents raised issues and protested about the community’s culture which they said was not inclusive.

For Burlington, engaging ODC was seen as the key to moving forward.

“Dr. Daniel Schroeder and his colleagues at ODC assisted the City of Burlington through a creative process, allowing for difficult discussions that are both mentally and emotionally tough to organically occur,” said Carina Walters, Burlington city administrator. “Through his genuine

leadership, he facilitated a successful initiative, guiding the Mayor's Task Force membership to identify a clear purpose."

#### Community Participants Fully Prepared

The Burlington process included selection and preparation of community residents for a day-long roundtable discussion, facilitation of those discussions, and creation of an action-oriented report for ongoing steps to embrace inclusivity.

"As we hoped, the conversations evolved in a positive direction and gained momentum along the way," Schroeder said. "Cautious and wary 'testing the waters' gave way to full, active, free-wheeling engaged and collaborative discussion, characterized by much goodwill and affirming, hopeful attitudes. In the end, a sense of pride in the community and what it could do in the area of DEI, emerged."



Dr. Daniel Schroeder

When a community starts to run this "race" it needs to recognize that it is a "marathon," not a "sprint," Schroeder advised.

"Right now, after the first few months of work, a strong foundation is being built upon which subsequent actions and initiatives can be added," he said. "We see an engaged group of diverse stakeholders guided by committed and dedicated community leaders. So far, the effort has been well received. The participants have demonstrated enthusiasm and willingness to confront the hard, and sometimes controversial, issues associated with DEI initiatives. All of this bodes well for the journey that lies ahead."

#### Culture Is a Key Area to Explore

In Burlington, the community culture was one of the areas of discussion. It's a community's "other bottom line" and a key area to explore, Schroeder said.

"Quality of life might be the bottom line for a community, but community leaders need to ask themselves what actions and initiatives are being taken to ensure an excellent quality of life for all community members."

Those questions inevitably lead to exploration of community culture such as vision, mission, values, and other characteristics, Schroeder noted.

ODC has worked with Wisconsin municipalities for more than 25 years, and Schroeder has more than 30 years of experience in organizational effectiveness.

“The area of diversity, equality and inclusivity has always been part of my focus,” he said. “With heightened awareness of this issue over the past year, we’ve encountered a growing number of communities that want to take action.”

### Moving Beyond Apprehension

Schroeder said apprehension is a common initial reaction to moving forward, but that apprehension “demonstrates their concern for taking the right course of action, and generating the desired results.”

Community members expect action, he noted, adding that community leaders can’t ignore the issues.

“As a leader, you must act,” he said. “Not acting is the wrong move and sends the wrong message. A community-based issue or challenge properly warrants a community-based action plan, one that is sponsored and championed by the community leaders.”

ODC uses a proven Appreciative Inquiry evidence-based change management methodology for the process.

“AI is outcome-oriented, collaborative, and positive – a key component of which has to do with identifying and pursuing the best of which the system is capable,” Schroeder said. “Because it involves co-creation and collaboration, all stakeholders have the chance to have their voices heard, their thoughts considered, etc. This immediately creates a sense of ownership and ‘buy in.’ Interestingly, the process can also be fun, freeing, and stimulating – the total opposite of the feelings gloom and despair that often exist once a problem has surfaced.”

### A Foundation for Action

ODC’s post-session action report is a comprehensive summary of all the engagement’s activities and ideas generated in discussions. Observations, recommendations and sources of additional information are offered for ongoing activity.

“Ultimately, the post-session action report is the foundation for subsequent action taking– literally turning ideas into actionable activity,” Schroeder said.

Formation of a task force or core team is the most typical mechanism that a community uses to move forward.

Schroeder detailed ODC’s work on diversity, equity and inclusivity at a recent Wisconsin League of Municipalities event.

Community leaders who want to learn more about the process can contact Schroeder at ODC in Brookfield, Wis., at 262-827-1901, at [info@od-consultants.com](mailto:info@od-consultants.com), or via the website

<https://www.od-consultants.com>.

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