NIST Community Building Group

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

OUTLINE

- The Volunteers
- The Problem and Group Motivation
- What the Group Did, Learned and Produced Thus Far
- Broad Observations and Recommendations
- Next Steps

NCBG Volunteers

Name	Org
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Katie Schlatter	BOO (Boulder)
Michelle Cordova	EEO (Boulder)
Riley Wilson	PAO
Dan Cipra	M&O
Andrew Conn	IAAO
Jeanita Pritchett	DEIO
Ashley Boggs-Russell	PCO (Charleston)
Albert Wavering	EL
Skip Vaughn	OFPM
Amy Cubert	OHRM
Konstantina Di Menza	CTL

Name	Org
Christine Carson	CTL (Boulder)
Meghan Percy	OSHE
Jim St. Pierre	ITL
Heather Snow	OAAM
Robert Hickernell	PML (Boulder)
Christopher Currens	OHRM
Adam Biacchi	PML (Sigma Xi Liaison)
Juan Fung	DEIA (EL)
Greta Babakhanova	MML (G PEAR Liaison)
Jo Wu	DEIA (Shops)
Khan Hasan	ADIIS
Heather Mayton	ADIIS
Jennifer Berry	MML (B PEAR Liaison)
Mark Ferris	PML (B PEAR Liaison)
Barbara Guttman	ITL
Mike Fasolka	MML (Chair)

- 31 Volunteers from across NIST
- All ADs represented; Most OUs represented

- G,B,C NIST sites represented, HI Liaison
- Liaisons to G/B PEAR, Sigma Xi, WiSTEM

Staff and Leadership:

"NIST is losing valuable workplace attributes we had before the pandemic"

Valuable Aspects:
- Sense of Community and Belonging
- Institutional Pride, Esprit de Corps
- Fun
- High-Quality Early Career Experiences
- Stakeholder/Customer Engagement
- Networking and Connection
- Idea Sharing, Collaboration and Teamwork
- Sense of Wellness and Wellbeing

*Elements a healthy **work community***
*Elements of a **great employee experience***
Key to NIST Mission

Many of these are better/more easily fostered with in-person interactions (e.g. on campus)

Common Staff Viewpoint:

"I have no *reason* to be on campus"

- I can do a lot from home
- When I work on campus, I get what I need to get done and then leave

  } We trained staff to do this 2+ yrs

- Being on campus is difficult

  "I have to leave campus for everything I need"

- There is little happening on campus
- I feel lonely and isolated

Many staff have never experienced a vibrant NIST campus

NIST Community Building Group

Motivation: NIST Leadership and Staff are concerned about poor work culture and lack of interpersonal interaction, especially on campus(es)

**Goal:** Jumpstart NIST work culture in ways that spur interaction, and enhance valuable workplace attributes

Method: Purposeful creation of programs of events, practices and spaces designed to support and enrich workplace culture

Belonging

Esprit de Corps

Institutional Pride

Wellness and Wellbeing

Community

Fun

Networking and Connection

Collaboration and Teamwork

Early Career Experiences

Simple Model of Culture

A Culture can be defined (in part) by:

1) Commonly held **Values** (beliefs, mores…)
2) **Behaviors** and **Practices** that support and celebrate held values (customs, rules, special events…) This is accountability!
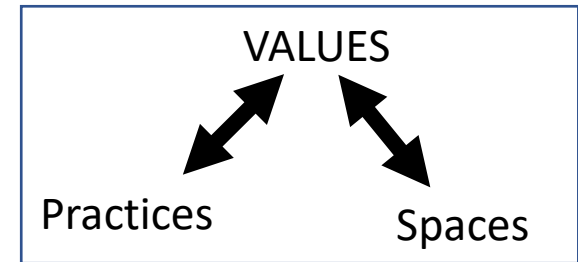
In addition, a Culture may create

3) **Spaces** that support cultural practices (meeting spaces, special areas…)

If we want to change/build culture, we need to embrace values, adopt supporting behaviors/practices and create supporting spaces.

Simple Model of Workplace Culture

NIST

Culture: Liberal Democracy

Values:

- Representative Government
- Transparency
- Rule of Law

Practices/Behaviors

- Elections
- Debate and Press Freedom
- Checks and Balances
- National holidays

Spaces

- Polling Places
- Buildings for representatives to meet
- Courts

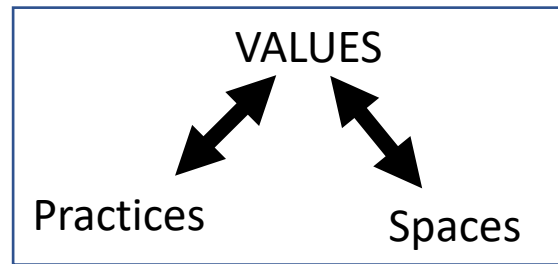**Culture:** NIST Work Culture

Values/Valuable Aspects:

- Sense of Community and Belonging
- Institutional Pride, Esprit de Corps
- Enculturation
- Fun
- High-Quality Early Career Experiences
- Stakeholder/Customer Engagement
- Professional Networking
- Creativity
- Idea Sharing, Collaboration, Teamwork
- Sense of Wellness and Wellbeing
- DEIA

Practices/Behaviors:

- Many NIST in-person events were paused due to pandemic and not restarted
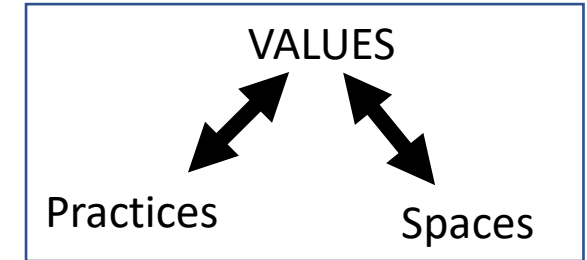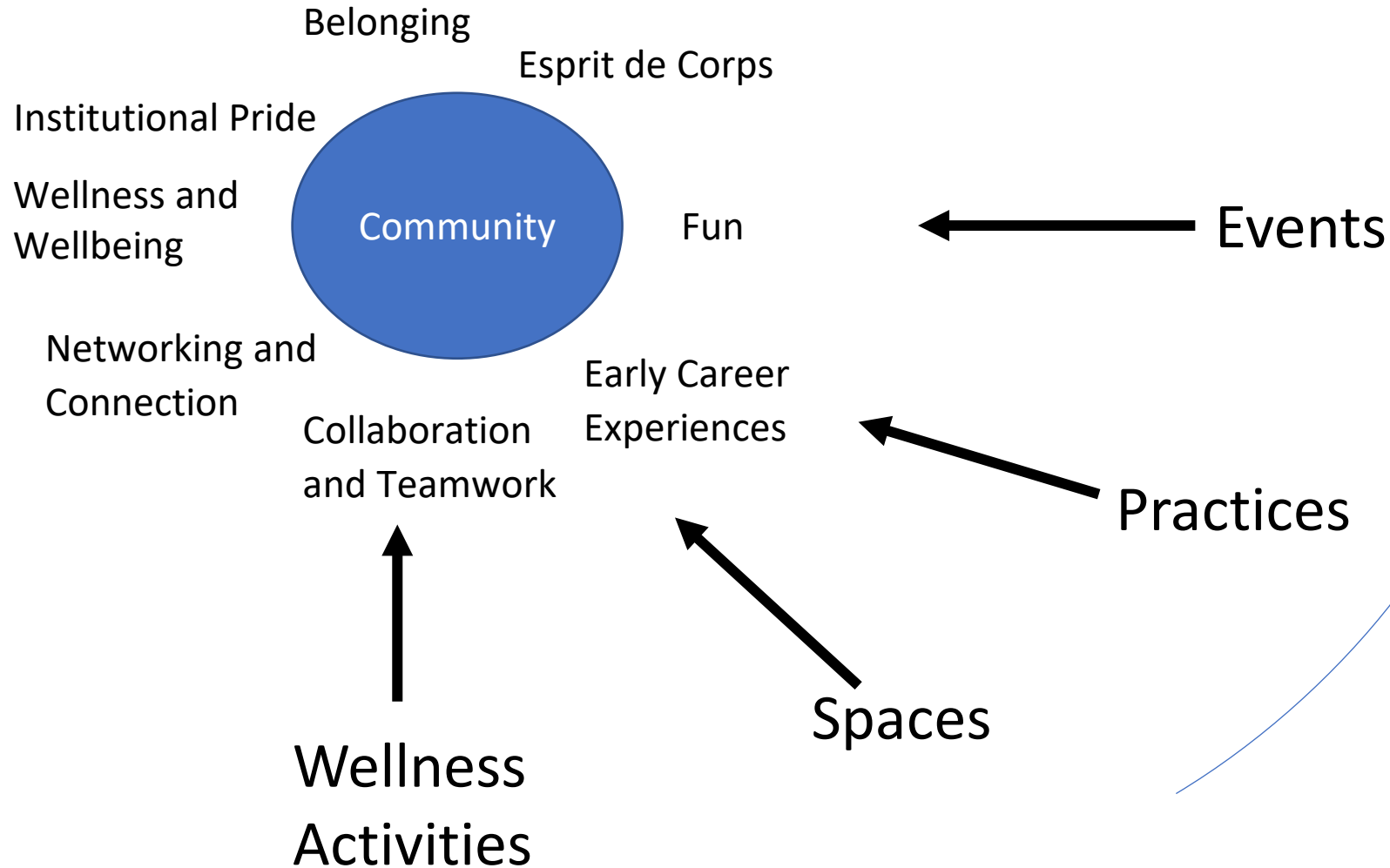- Some of these transitioned to virtual events

Spaces

- Many of these are under renovation, in planning, closed, or don't exist.

VALUES

Practices   Spaces

Initial Brainstorming Activity

WORKPLACE VALUES/ VALUABLE ASPECTS

Belonging

Esprit de Corps

Institutional Pride

Wellness and Wellbeing

Community

Fun ← Events

Networking and Connection

Early Career Experiences ← Practices

Collaboration and Teamwork ↑ Spaces

↑ Wellness Activities

VALUES
Practices ↔ ↔ Spaces

What *Events, Practices, Spaces, and Wellness Activities* does NIST need to support these Workplace Values?

Brainstorming Summary

110 creative ideas were generated

Diverse Themes:

Care for Others

Wellness Spaces

Networking Events

Lab Tours

Food and Beverage Services

Fun and Social Events

Arts and Culture

DEIA Focused Ideas

Open Houses

Places to Eat and Gather

Celebratory Events

Contests/Competitions

New Services

Beautification/Improvements to Work Environment

Mental Wellbeing Programs

Ways to Improve Hybrid

Physical Health Programs

Social/Affinity Groups

NIST

1) Working on NIST Campuses is Difficult

NIST Campuses lack at least one of these basics:

Palatable Water: Gaithersburg (many buildings)
Food: All (Gburg has pop-up)
Coffee/Snacks: All (Gburg has pop-up)

These are barriers to staff working on campus

2) NIST Campuses Lack "Neutral Space"

Welcoming space where staff from different parts of the organization can freely gather, socialize, eat, drink

- NIST Gburg Cafeteria filled this need
- Many central common areas are closed
- Common areas require permission/scheduling   ⎫ Not
- Many suitable spaces are "owned" by OUs   ⎭ Neutral

This is a barrier to staff socializing across campus

Virtual Platforms are a competing Neutral Space

3) News about Activities and Campus Improvements is not Reaching Staff on Campus

- Example: Lack of awareness of Pop-up and Pop-Up *Coffee* in Gaithersburg
- Example: Plan for replacing water fountains
- Some supervisors discourage participation in community activities

Some Reasons and Recommendations follow

NCBG Program Proposals In Development

NIST

Themes/Priorities Within

Campus Improvements
- Campus Basics
- Gathering Places
- Campus Services
- Campus Environment
- Commuter Resources

- Water
- Central Eating Places (G,B)
- Coffee

- Institutional Pride
- Social Events
- Enculturation

Activities and Events
- Learning about NIST and NIST work
- Networking and Connection
- Celebrating Community @ NIST
- Creating Community via VEOs
- NIST Week
- Games and Competitions
- Re-invigorating BLEA/SEBA

Policy, Guidance, Information
- Policy/Guidance Package for Community and DEIA Activities
- More TBD

Guidance for Supervisors

Better Hybrid
- Rebuilding connection through intention and equity in hybrid work
- More TBD

Cross-campus Community

"Beyond the Gym" Wellness

Wellness and Work Life Balance
- Group Activities for Physical Wellness
- Mental Wellbeing
- Practicing Mindfulness

Proposals for recommended programs of action

Broad Observations and Recommendations

Staff Campus Experience

Observations

Many organizations at NIST are partly responsible for the staff campus experience.

- OFPM
- SEBA/BLEA
- VEOs
- DEIO
- EAP
- OUs
- PAO
- OHRM

No one is responsible for the big picture or for coordinating efforts needed to shape workplace culture.

Recommendations:

1. Make the staff campus experience a focus and priority
2. Put a body in charge of managing staff experience

Other organizations: Employee Experience Office(r)

- Vision for workplace experience/culture
- Builds/Coordinates community activities
- Staff engagement/feedback
- Holder of Institutional workplace values, history, traditions

Focus on NIST and NIST Work

Observation: NCBG-ideated activities and discussions showed:

- Staff want to know more about the work of their colleagues
- Staff want to know more about NIST, NIST work and how NIST works.
- ADMR staff want a connection to the science they support
- ADMR staff want the opportunity to celebrate their work too

Institutional Pride
Pride in Work
NIST Identity
Belonging

Recommendation: Activities about NIST and NIST Work:

- Colloquia on NIST work: Sigma Xi NIST Frontiers Series
- NIST Movie Night: PAO videos w/ panel discussions (SEBA has popcorn maker)*
- Lab Tours for administrative/support staff*
- Open Houses*
- NIST-themed games and contests*
- Talks on NIST Awards work

*NCBG

FOCUS OF TWO NCBG PROGRAMS

Theme: Inclusion

Inclusion is not addressed by simply inviting everyone to every event

Observations:
- In the past, campus events largely aimed at ZP and ZA Employees.
- Fewer activities tailored for ZT, ZS, Associates and Wage Grade employees.
- Inclusion at NIST is complex: Campuses, Admin/Technical, Career Path, Generational…
- NIST staff have developed higher expectations around inclusion

Recommendations:
- Make inclusion a design factor in community program development
- Inclusion means common activities for all NIST staff AND diverse events tailored to meet the needs of diverse groups.
- Communications that reaches all staff is key to inclusion
- Widespread supervisor support/permission key to inclusion

Theme: Communication Challenges

Observations

- NCBG Discussions: Communications about campus events/activities are not reaching staff

- Blast email and iNET remain the go-to methods for communicating campus news

- New work patterns suggest that on-campus staff aren't reading email or iNET while onsite.
  - Campus: lab/physical work, Home: computer work

- Some staff don't have regular access to computers or email.

- There is no single place to look for on campus-centered activities, news and events.

Recommendations (w/PAO)

1) Diversify strategies for communicating about campus activities
   - Posters and Flyers
   - News/Events Monitors in Hallway/Lobby (delayed due to IT Security requirements)
   - Multifaceted Comms Campaigns
   - Direct Calendar Invitations

2) Centralized/compiled information about campus events
   - Campus Events carve-out on iNET
   - ON CAMPUS TODAY Email Newsletter

3) OUs need to amplify/repeat communication of on-campus activities.
   - Town Halls, Emails, Local Announcements
   - Support and Encouragement to Participate

Next: Vertical Support is Essential

Top Leadership: Support and Communication of All of Campus/All of NIST Events

ADs: Cross-OU Activities for Tailored for AD Community

OU/Division: Emphasize Importance of Community
Amplify event communications, community news
Recognize Community Building as Necessary Work
Organize OU and Division Level Campus Events
Recognition for On Campus and Community Building Efforts

First Line Supervisors: Recognize value of community
Encourage, or at least permit, staff to participate in campus events, community activities.

Current/Planned Community Events

Activity	Timeframe	Organization
NIST Frontiers Seminar Series	Jan, Feb, March 2023	NIST Sigma Xi
Sigma Xi Early-Career Poster Presentation	May, 2023	NIST Sigma Xi
PEAR Writing Group	Weekly	PEAR
Boulder PEAR Seminar Series	Monthly	PEAR
Boulder PEAR Lunch	Biweekly	PEAR
PEAR Accolades	April-July	PEAR
PEAR Networking Happy Hour	Monthly	PEAR
PEAR Buddy Program	Ongoing	PEAR
Division-level Open House (643)	Feb-23	MML/643
WiSTEM lunch and learn	reccurring events	WiSTEM
PI Day Celebration	3/14/2023	MML, EL
History of Womens Groups at NIST	2-Mar-23	WiSTEM
Her NISTory	9-Mar	WiSTEM
Career Mentoring Events	23-Mar	WiSTEM
Women in Stem Town Hall	30-Mar	WiSTEM

1. Discuss work and recommendations with ADs (ADLP complete)
2. Plan paths for priority ideas. Identify Champions.
3. Secure support (time and money) from NIST leadership
4. Complete and refine Programs
   - Effective and impactful
   - Plan for inclusion
5. Feedback from staff
   - Public comment on written programs
   - Focus Groups

Thank You!

- Are we on track?

- What other efforts should NIST be thinking about in terms of building a community where everyone thrives?