

# REGIONAL ORGANIZATION FOCUSES ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



**NORTHEASTERN PA  
DIVERSITY EDUCATION  
CONSORTIUM**

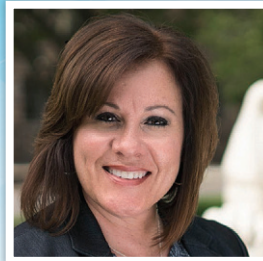
*See the world in a different light*



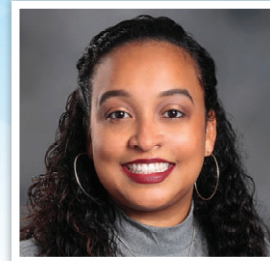
**Cindy Biesecker**  
Board Chair



**Sean McHale**  
Director



**Dr. Tracy Garnick**  
Strategic Planning Chair



**Erica Acosta**  
Program Chair

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Diversity Education Consortium's (NEPDEC) mission is to cultivate a more diverse and inclusive culture in Northeastern Pennsylvania. According to Board Chair, Cindy Biesecker and Administrative Director, Sean McHale, NEPDEC is a membership driven organization whose objectives are to educate, inform and support diversity and equity initiatives; organize networking events to encourage interaction and share important resources to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Collaboration and leveraging regional resources are crucial for its efforts to succeed. NEPDEC works with other like-minded groups including the Martin Luther King Commission, the Rainbow Alliance, the Scranton Area Community Foundation and the regional public library systems to provide educational programming. Before the COVID pandemic, NEPDEC offered two annual regional conferences. Presently, NEPDEC works with members mainly through zoom conferences and webinars. "Our intent is that these events further the dialogue on diversity and inclusion in both the workplace and the community," said Cindy Biesecker, Board Chair.

NEPDEC members include the Dallas Area School District, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Guard Insurance Group, King's College, Luzerne County Community College, Misericordia University, Mohegan Sun Pocono, Penn State University – Hazleton, Penn State University – Wilkes-Barre, Penn State University – Scranton, Peoples Security Bank and Trust, Procter and Gamble, Prudential Financial, Wilkes-Barre Area School District, Wilkes University and the Wyoming Area School District.

NEPDEC's primary goals include member education, member value, diversity initiatives, shared resources to advance diversity, inclusion and equity in work settings and in the community. NEPDEC promotes dialogue and offers concrete, practical steps and shares solutions to the diversity challenge. Leadership of NEPDEC recognizes that there is no silver bullet or single answer, rather an opportunity to draw on the experience and successes of member organizations where investment, focus, and application have the ability to serve as remarkable agents of change.

To support diversity initiatives, NEPDEC's 2022 spring programs will include a focus on race and racism and the hidden biases of good people. NEPDEC will educate members on ways to promote a more diverse Human Resources pipeline and provide practical

and concrete examples of success stories. NEPDEC will sponsor the Transhealth Virtual Conference at the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine in April. Later this year, NEPDEC will focus on school and campus safety, health system inequities and the need for systemic policy changes to create and promote equity in health care, according to Erica Acosta, Chair of NEPDEC Programming.

NEPDEC's education programs are committed to increasing transparency around diversity issues and sharing resources to move our mission forward. Its Leadership recognizes that the way we think about and perceive others can help or hinder our progress. When individuals belong to groups that are seriously underrepresented in companies and organizations including racial minorities or women, this could lead to biased and stereotype-based evaluations. This can have negative consequences for both individual workers and the larger organization, resulting in limited progress.

NEPDEC's membership is widespread, and its organizations are complex and have different internal cultures and dynamics. It does not make sense to take single focused, one-size-fits-all policy and impose it on other different organizations. Diversity policies must fit the organization, and by sharing collective knowledge and experience, support diversity initiatives that are committed to making progress in this area. Organizational context matters and it should be considered when companies are deciding how to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.

NEPDEC's strategies include engaging members in important dialogue and communication to educate and inform, understand and remove barriers, offer concrete, pragmatic and practical ideas and concepts for meaningful, effective change, and understanding the importance of measuring outcomes as a primary focus, according to Dr. Tracy Garnick, Chair of NEPDEC Strategic Planning.

Beginning next spring, the NEPDEC board of directors will recognize a regional leader for their professional accomplishments and diversity leadership efforts in NEPA.

As the common goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion become even more widespread, companies have the daunting task of figuring out what works. For businesses and corporations that are interested in learning more about NEPDEC and joining its regional efforts please find more at [NEPDEC.org](https://www.nepdec.org).