

## Building Extension's Capacity to Work Across Difference



The Washington State University Extension (WSUE) *Navigating Difference: Cultural Competency Training* is designed to assist Extension professionals expand their skills in working with diverse audiences. The overarching goals for the training are to assist participants to:

- ◆ Become more aware of their own personal and organizational cultures
- ◆ Examine how their personal and organizational cultures affect their ability to work across difference in both negative and positive ways
- ◆ Build skills to increase competencies as they work with others who are different from them

Navigating Difference borrows from a variety of approaches to diversity work. The training is based on the premise that becoming culturally competent is a developmental process. Participants gain cultural competency skills by engaging in experiences that challenge their assumptions and patterns of interacting with others.

Navigating Difference is an 18 hour training based on the following WSU Extension Cultural Competencies:

- ◆ Cultural Awareness
- ◆ Cultural Understanding
- ◆ Cultural Knowledge
- ◆ Cultural Interaction
- ◆ Cultural Sensitivity

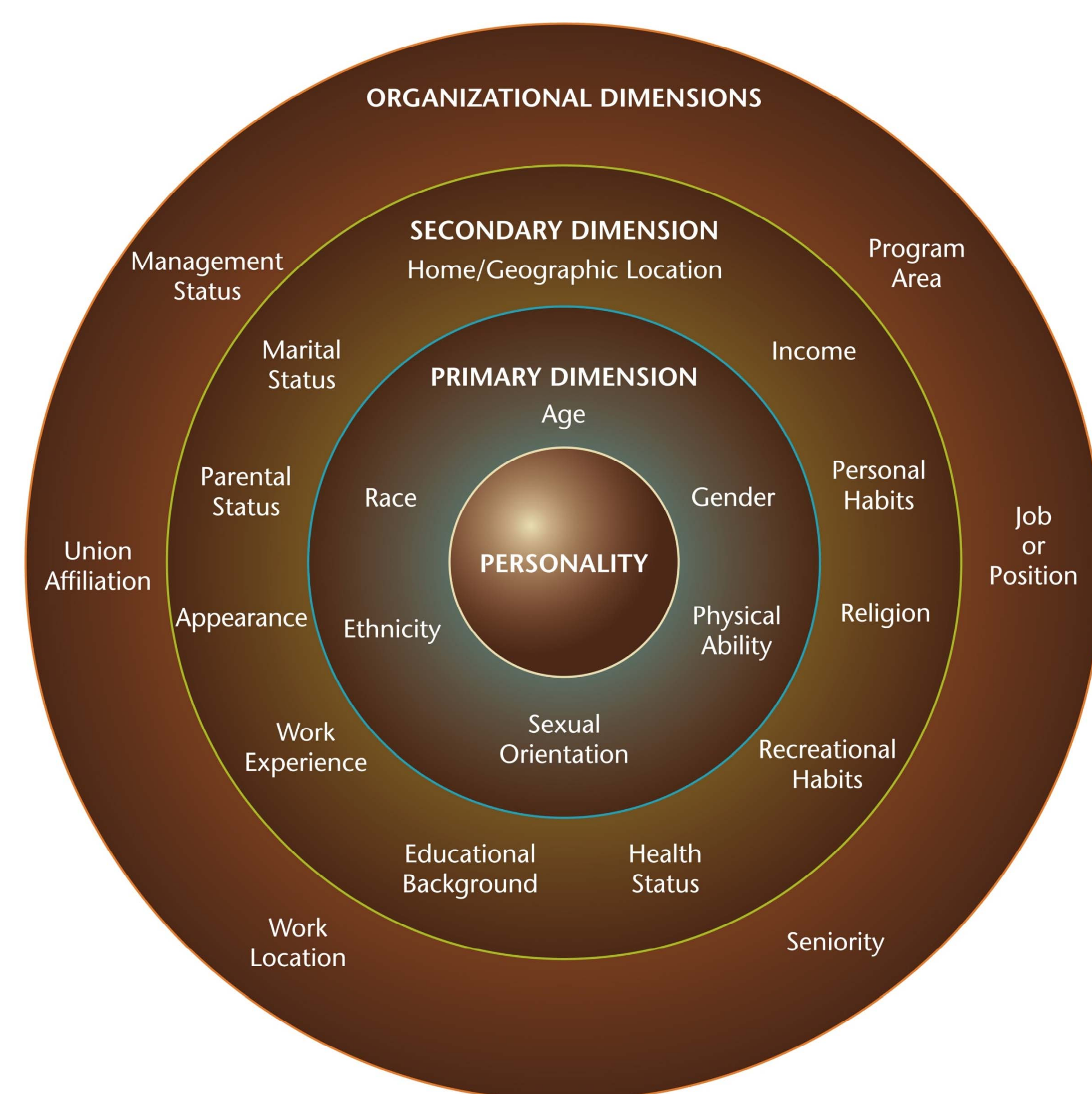
Training modules based on the competencies are each from two to four hours long. Sessions can be offered in an intensive three-day format, or over a period of months with opportunities for application between modules.

The intent of the program is not to present specific cultural knowledge but rather to build competencies that can be used whenever encountering a new situation/culture. The competency-based approach builds skills that apply to all kinds of difference, and that can be used no matter how much or how little interaction participants have with members of a group. We believe this approach is more useful and more sustainable than information focused on a specific group.

Table 1. Theoretical Approaches to Diversity

CATEGORY	SOCIAL JUSTICE	INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION	ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Academic Roots	Philosophy and Sociology	Anthropology and Communication	Business and Economics
Social Roots	Civil rights/ grassroots movements	Prejudice studies	Efficiency studies; industrial engineering
Institutional "Home"	U. Massachusetts—Amherst	U. Minnesota	Harvard; U. Iowa
Training Approach (Pedagogy)	Affective dimension; attentive to emotional issues/responses. Transformational: highly personal; self-reflective; high touch.	Intercultural dimension; analytical; examine details and parse out. Developmental, experiential. Focuses on transactions.	Quantitative dimension; outcomes; observational; case study. Rational actors theory. Theories of science are very influential.
Some Leading Theorists	Paolo Freire Jurgen Habermas	Gordon Allport Robert Park	Kurt Lewin Peter Syngé

## Describing Outcomes for Culturally Competent Professionals



The intent of the Navigating Difference training is to prepare Extension professionals to work effectively across many dimensions of diversity.

**What does it mean for professionals to be "culturally competent"?** WSU Extension has articulated three outcomes and related indicators to assess the effectiveness of its professional development around diversity issues.

Culturally competent professionals:

**Engage in culturally diverse settings, initiatives and programs.**

Indicators:

- ◆ Participate in opportunities to increase intercultural competence in specific job-related contexts.
- ◆ Partner with diverse organizations through board/committee membership, joint sponsorship of events or other forms of collaboration.
- ◆ Serve on diversity-related committees for Extension, the university or the community.
- ◆ Encourage, support and model cultural competencies among colleagues, staff and volunteers.

**Integrate cultural competencies in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programming.**

Indicators:

- ◆ Engage members of diverse communities in determining program design and content.
- ◆ Incorporate diversity outcomes and activities into Plans of Work.
- ◆ Adapt recruitment, marketing and delivery strategies to effectively reach diverse audiences.
- ◆ Utilize evaluation approaches and methods that effectively measure change with diverse learners.

**Practice strategies for successful intercultural communication in professional settings.**

Indicators:

- ◆ Adapt personal communication style and behaviors to be effective in variety of cultural situations and settings.
- ◆ Recognize and address conflict arising from cultural differences.
- ◆ Model and share best practices for communicating across differences.

## Evaluation Methods

### Sample

- ◆ 42 participants from two trainings
- ◆ These were pilot surveys; demographics not collected

### Measures

- ◆ 12 items designed to assess objectives of the training; for example:
  - ◆ "I recognize the different cultural styles of dealing with conflict"
  - ◆ "I understand how privilege may affect my work with people from cultures different from my own."
  - ◆ "I have a framework to help me understand cultural differences"

- ◆ Items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

### Procedure

- ◆ Pretest at the beginning of the workshop
- ◆ Posttest at the end of the workshop

## Evaluation Results

Change from pretest to posttest measured with paired *t*-tests

**Significant change ( $p < .01$ ) on all items but 2:**

- ◆ Cultural sensitivity is something you either have or you don't
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity can be developed

**Items that showed greatest change were**

- ◆ **Item 1:** I have a framework to help me understand cultural differences
- ◆ **Item 2:** I can identify strategies to work with cultural guides to better inform my program planning and implementation
- ◆ **Item 3:** I understand the barriers to intercultural communications
- ◆ **Item 4:** I have strategies for effective intercultural communications
- ◆ **Item 5:** I recognize the different cultural styles of dealing with conflict

