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### **Is There a Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion?**

On September 23, 2016 the AABLC hosted a panel discussion entitled, *How to Stop Scaring Away Good People, Benefits of a Culturally Competent Community*. The panel discussion included representatives from various organizations in the Lehigh Valley including Dana Eldridge, Co-Owner, Lehigh Valley Martial Arts and Activity Learning Centers, Dr. Nichole Huff, Chief Compliance Officer, St. Luke's University Health Network, David Jones, Lehigh County Commissioner and Jack Zilfou, Attorney. The panel was moderated by Bart Bailey, Consultant. Discussion focused on the challenges of recruiting and retaining diverse employees in the Lehigh Valley. PP&L and other organizations participated in the discussion. One of the concerns is the ability of organizations to keep qualified people of color in the Valley once they are retained. Among the issues considered is a failure to engage new employees, not making the employee feel like they are a part of the team and treating the employee differently. Current research suggests that diversity or the differences in people enrich team dynamics and may contribute positively to the bottom line.

Organizations that align diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices to business objectives are more likely to perform well on financial outcomes. D&I and engagement are integral to successful talent management systems in organizations. According to a Bersin by Deloitte survey of 454 global organizations that generated more than \$750 million in revenue in 2013, large organizations with mature talent strategies had 2.3 times higher cash flow per employee over a three-year period. Mature smaller organizations had 13 times higher mean cash flow from operations.

Implications for the future based on the research indicate that structured D&I programs can be helpful. The framework and strategies should include, a top level (CEO/COO/CHRO) focus and buy-in; establishing behavioral standards, metrics and accountability; training; integrating D&I into recruitment, performance management, and leadership assessment.

So as a community, do we value D&I? If so, what are we willing to do about it?