



HOTELS

'We can and should do more': Hotel industry announces \$5 million, 5-year diversity plan

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The hotel and lodging industry is making a \$5 million commitment to reverse patterns of discrimination and exclusion that have kept people of color from reaching leadership positions.

The five-year plan from the American Hotel & Lodging Foundation aims to increase diversity in the industry in which people of color mostly occupy lower-paying entry-level roles and the vast majority of senior managers are white.

The American Hotel & Lodging Association has 27,000 members, including 10 of the largest hotel companies, in the U.S., including Marriott, Wyndham, Hilton and Hyatt, and 80% of franchise hotels.

Rosanna Maietta, president and CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging foundation, said the industry is coming together "to see greater and faster impact."

In a 2019 report card citing Equal Employment Opportunity Commission data, the NAACP found that entry-level and lower-wage positions were mostly staffed by workers of color, but "racial and ethnic minorities remain inequitably dispersed throughout the lodging workforce."

In 2015, 81% of top managers were white, up from 71% in 2007, according to the report card.

The hotel industry has long faced claims of discrimination toward employees and guests.

While data has been thrown off by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced furloughs and layoffs, costing the industry 10 years of job growth in one fell swoop, according to Maietta, industry demographic from before the pandemic shows that there is room for improvement.

Industry executives created a task force last year with an eye to increasing diversity in hiring at all levels of organizations and promoting more people of color into leadership positions with a commitment to create metrics and transparency to measure progress.

"We did recognize coming out of the summer last year when the spotlight was so focused on diversity that we can and should do more," Maietta said. "We were keenly aware that we could grasp the moment that we're in and do more to advance greater awareness, but more than just awareness, action."

Last May, national protests over the police killing of George Floyd, a Black man from Minneapolis who died under the knee of a white police officer, inspired many companies to revisit policies and hiring practices across industries.

While the commitment comes with a five-year plan, Maietta said the changes and programs implemented as a result are meant to be permanent.

Goals for the first year include a leadership academy focused on increasing representation on the executive level; a cross-industry mentorship program for employees to be paired with leaders at different companies; a national ad campaign to attract new, diverse talent to the industry; and metrics to create transparency and hold the industry accountable, according to Maietta.

In the four years to follow, the American Hotel & Lodging Foundation also plans to add unconscious bias training along with job resources, coaching for the executive level and a knowledge-sharing program intended to help companies to share resources.

"There's an opportunity for everyone in hotel and lodging," Greg Juceam, president and COO of G6 Hospitality said. "The barrier is low and upward mobility is high."

Survey: 74% of hotels will have to lay off more employees without coronavirus aid from Congress