

Introduction to Developing an Inclusive Workforce

Overview

Employing a diverse workforce and fostering an inclusive work environment leads to an improved culture, increased productivity and creativity, enhanced customer satisfaction, and greater market opportunities. A diverse workforce signals to applicants that they will be welcomed, increasing the potential applicant pool. Most important, there is the case for social responsibility to improve employment equity. While most Minnesota employers recognize the importance – and the benefits – of attracting and retaining a diverse workforce, not all employers know how to get started.

Employer Action Steps

1. Express your commitment

- a. Add your organization’s commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in your stated mission, values, or policies; Leadership support is key.
 - i. Samples of CEO Statement Template, CEO Action Plan, “We All Belong” and Equity Statements can be found here: [Express your Commitment \(https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Express-your-Commitment\)](https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Express-your-Commitment)

2. Assess your organization

- a. Assess how Diversity, Equity and Inclusion influence your organization’s policies and culture.
- b. Determine which of these assessment examples are best for your organization (or find one that aligns with your industry):
 - i. NACE D&I Assessment
 - ii. Global Inclusion Index
 - iii. Leadership Assessment: Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)
 - iv. Intercultural Effectiveness Scale
- c. [Assess your Organization \(https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Assess-your-Organization\)](https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Assess-your-Organization)

3. Provide training

- a. Find the right training for your workforce. It should address implicit bias, inclusivity, and equity, including health equity, systems of power, common language, and intercultural acuity.
- b. Examples:

DEVELOP A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

- i. Inclusion Network Training
- ii. Diversity Council - Equity logic
- iii. Inclusion Inc. – Inclusive Business Training
- iv. Minnesota State Community & Technical College
- c. [Provide DEI Training \(https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Provide-DEI-Training\)](https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Provide-DEI-Training)

4. Remember the health equity

- a. What employers/employees can do to take action for health equity:
 - i. Support paid family leave.
 - ii. Provide health insurance.
 - iii. **Ban the box** from your job application.
 - iv. **Promote healthy behaviors** among your employees.
 - v. Commit to **improve the hiring and retention** of workers with disabilities.
- b. Review this health equity resource: [Achieving Health Equity \(https://www.rwif.org/en/library/features/achieving-health-equity.html\)](https://www.rwif.org/en/library/features/achieving-health-equity.html)

5. Sustainability practices

- a. Sustain by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in your workplace culture and practices.
 - i. Develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan
 - ii. Engage employees in an ongoing, structured way with a diversity council or employee resource groups who advise leadership, offer valuable insights and data, and engage in outreach to diverse communities. The goal is to identify and change policies, practices, and patterns that cause barriers to Black, Indigenous and People of Color.
- b. Review the [Employer Guide to Developing a Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Workforce \(https://b3beb445-e737-4181-938c-70c67dbd8791.filesusr.com/ugd/457b86_c7c6c693bbfd4bdeb771ff1b61c69c9e.pdf\)](https://b3beb445-e737-4181-938c-70c67dbd8791.filesusr.com/ugd/457b86_c7c6c693bbfd4bdeb771ff1b61c69c9e.pdf)

6. Additional resources

- a. Northwest Minnesota Regional Workforce Alliance:
 - i. Toolkit: [Inclusive Workforce Employer Toolkit \(https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit\)](https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit)
 - ii. Additional websites to find resources: [Sustain DEI Practices \(https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Sustain-DEI-Practices\)](https://www.rwa-nw.org/inclusive-employer-toolkit/Sustain-DEI-Practices)
- b. Hennepin County workplace wellness e-newsletter: [Health@Work E-tips \(https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNHENNE/bulletins/2da55a8\)](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNHENNE/bulletins/2da55a8)

Tips to get started

Below are suggestions shared by James Burroughs, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer at Children's Hospital Minnesota, and Nancy Lyons, CEO at Clockwork and author of [Work Like a Boss \(https://worklikeabossguide.com/\)](https://worklikeabossguide.com/) during Hennepin County's Health@Work health equity series.

- **Do something even if leadership support is lacking.** Find something you can do, no matter how imperfectly. This is a messy space, and it is only through failure that we get better. Commit to doing something and to measuring progress.
- **Acknowledge that wellness looks different for everyone.** Wellness has traditionally been an “affluent, white, able-bodied and thin space” where not everyone feels comfortable. Challenge your assumptions about what “wellness” looks like. Offer flexibility so people can make wellness fit their own model of physical and mental health.
- **Question the assumptions baked into wellness offerings and discounts.** Have you explored program benefits through a Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) lens? Who might feel ignored by your current markers of wellness? Who is not included? Pick one thing and do it in a more equitable way.
- **Avoid “people of color solutions.”** Whenever possible, avoid lumping groups of people together who may have different needs. Instead, break data down into smaller subpopulations.
- **Start seeing trauma.** When traumatic things happen, talk about it so those who are deeply affected don't have to take on the burden of bringing it up.
- **Engage in and champion uncomfortable conversations.** Address racial trauma, systemic racism, sexism, ageism, weightism, ableism to dismantle systems that lead to health inequalities.
- **Lead by example and make it okay to disagree.** Walk the talk. Authentic conversations need room for disagreement and conflict.

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