

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION: *definitions + distinctions*

Language in the fields of racial and gender equity are regularly evolving. Understanding key terms can prove helpful when working to develop strategies, standards, and practices that align with our most deeply held values. **Diversity, equity, and inclusion are each distinct concepts.** Understanding each element can help you forge a path and a plan to honor and support the unique contributions that each of your team members can make. Rather than jumble a conversation about the impacts of our identities on our lives by using an acronym (ex. DEI or EDI), we encourage learners and leaders to talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion as distinct and related concepts each with their own specific goals.



DIVERSITY:

The fact of human difference. The mix. Identities present. A mix of identities present does not automatically result in equity. Whenever two people are present, a “diversity” of identities is present. But not every aspect of our mix of identities has the same impact. For example, our difference in race is more impactful than our difference in height or hair color when it comes to the social determinants of health.

EQUITY:

Acknowledgment that we do not start on a level playing field. Achieving equity would mean that our outcomes were no longer predictable by identity group.



Different people have different needs. An equity framework encourages creativity – what solutions are required and possible? Striving towards equity encourages us to acknowledge the realities of power dynamics and the truth about the ways in which each of us face barriers and are afforded opportunities. Instead of one-size-fits all solutions, strive to learn about and meet the distinct needs of your team.

INCLUSION:

Inclusion is about decision-making and willingness to actually change policies, protocols, and practices. How difference is utilized as an asset when we make decisions.



Inclusion is about how we are all willing to do things differently based on the additional perspectives, lived experiences, and ideas that our friends and colleagues contribute. Inclusion is not about simply having “a seat at the table.” If I have a need that you don’t have, are you still willing to make sure my need gets met so I can be my best self for our team? Measuring inclusion is about people from non-dominant and target identity groups self-reporting that their contributions were considered.

MEANINGFUL REFLECTION + DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Effective diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work is goal-directed.

Specific goals are more meaningful than goals that are too general. For example, “working to end gender-based harassment” is more useful as an actionable goal than something obtuse like, “making sure our organization feels good to everyone.” The following are questions you can consider as an individual, in small groups, and as an entire organization.

Ask Yourself + Your Team These DIVERSITY QUESTIONS:

- ◆ Diverse in what way? What, precisely, are we talking about?
- ◆ What are the differences making a difference here and now?
- ◆ What about our mix do we want to change? Why?
- ◆ Which perspectives + lived experiences are currently missing?

Ask Yourself + Your Team These EQUITY QUESTIONS:

- ◆ How might we find out what different people need?
- ◆ How could we better support participation from our team?
- ◆ What is being considered the “norm” against which we are measuring? Why? What are the unintended consequences of treating certain people’s needs as norms and others as accommodations?

Ask Yourself + Your Team These INCLUSION QUESTIONS:

- ◆ What could we do to ensure each person gets to contribute?
- ◆ How do you go about making different decisions differently?
- ◆ Rather than focusing on just teaching folks “how we do things,” in what ways are you willing to be changed by new perspectives?

