

Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Message Manual for Organizations

INCLUSIVE dubuque
Connecting People • Strengthening Community

USING THIS TOOLKIT

This manual is a guide for use by leaders in our community. It will help you communicate with a variety of audiences about the importance of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in our community and in your organization—and how it can help your organization better achieve its mission. The language in this manual can be used as a reference or a template for preparing materials and presentations.

This manual draws on well-established models and best practices employed in marketing and communications for persuading and motivating people through language that not only informs, but also inspires. Communication built using this toolkit will help explain the importance of DEI to people who believe that it is "nice to have," but are not convinced it will increase their organization's effectiveness. Using this kind of language in all our communications will help us deliver a consistent and compelling message that will build support for this work.

This toolkit was adapted for Inclusive Dubuque from the D5 Coalition.

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WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

Diversity

The word “diversity” can mean different things to different people. We’ve defined it broadly to label the reality that individuals bring unique perspectives and life experiences to our community. These include, but are not limited to:

- Age/Generation
- Culture
- Disability
- Gender
- Nationality
- Race and ethnicity
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Class
- Veteran status

We acknowledge and respect that this is one of many ways to define diversity, a concept that can encompass many other human differences as well.

Equity

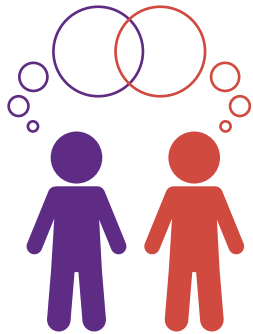
Ensuring access to opportunities for all individuals or groups, and providing resources to thrive.

Inclusion

How our community engages and supports different cultures and diverse needs.

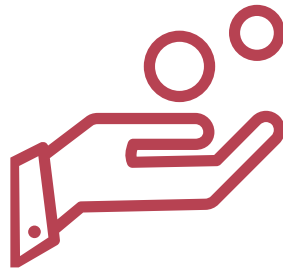
HOW DEI CONTRIBUTES TO IMPACT

The formula below represents how DEI contribute to impact—using key language and ideas that will motivate audiences to support DEI—and inspire them to take action.



DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Talking about diversity in terms of perspectives helps people intuitively understand how advancing diversity and inclusion can lead to better problem-solving.



+ MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Creating “opportunities” for community members describes equity in a way that is readily understood and supported.



+ GREATER EFFECTIVENESS

When you link diversity, equity, and inclusion to more effectively advancing an organization’s mission, you build support and inspire action.



= A STRONGER COMMUNITY

A 'stronger community' is a universal idea that can help your organization and our community connect to this cause.

DEI NARRATIVE

This narrative employs themes, words and phrases that motivate leaders to support this cause. These ways of talking also help clarify what Inclusive Dubuque is and why you and your organization support this community effort. Here is suggested language that can motivate leaders to support DEI:

Our community is becoming increasingly diverse. We need to understand and reflect this rich variety of perspectives in order to achieve greater impact. In order to do this, we have dedicated ourselves to creating an informed, equitable and inclusive community.

When we advance diversity, equity and inclusion in our organization, it helps us live up to our values, create a stronger community, and achieve greater impact. It is not easy to advance DEI, but as community leaders, we have the opportunity to show the way.

This is why organizations have come together in an ambitious effort called Inclusive Dubuque. We are a growing network that links many sectors including government, faith, business, nonprofit, education and more. We are committed to supporting an informed, equitable and inclusive community where everyone feels respected,

valued and engaged. We are part of a growing movement across the country to ensure that everyone has access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive, regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

By bringing leaders to the table, we build the potential to create a stronger community. Diversity and inclusion can help our organizations better identify creative solutions to internal challenges, and those faced by the communities we serve.

How can greater diversity, equity and inclusion in your organization enhance your impact? Commit to an action plan for your organization's hiring, policies and procedures.

SUCCESSFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

These are key words and phrases that underpin an effective narrative for describing DEI in a meaningful, inspiring way.

WINNING WORD	BENEFIT
Stronger Community	It is important for all community members to be able to see themselves as part of this effort. Creating a "stronger community" is a phrase that everyone can connect to.
Advancing	Advancing is a strong action word that shows progress, without sounding like we are promoting ideas that we are not also dedicated to living up to ourselves.
Diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI)	Diversity, equity and inclusion are what we are striving to advance. Greater diversity, equity and inclusion will strengthen our community.
Greater impact	"Greater impact" is a key goal for community leaders. While many may appreciate the social justice and moral values behind DEI, they want to know that advancing DEI in their organization will help them better achieve their mission.
Perspectives	Emphasizing the "variety of perspectives" brought to the table can help people intuitively understand how increasing diversity can improve effectiveness.
Growing network	People have been working to advance diversity for decades, so it is important to renew people's energy and urgency by emphasizing that Inclusive Dubuque is a growing movement of leaders.
New voices and expertise	Highlighting the tangible benefits of having diverse people at the table motivates people to support action to advance diversity—because they can more easily picture how it will strengthen their organization.
Effective	Organizational leaders strive to be effective at advancing their missions. Linking DEI to effectiveness can help convince them of its value.
Opportunities	Defining equity as creating "opportunities for our community"—rather than redistributing resources—helps people understand why it is important and more readily support it.

ONE MINUTE MESSAGE

This is a concise version of our message that can be used as a brief introduction to our work and can be spoken in about a minute.

[Insert name of business/organization] is dedicated to creating an informed, equitable and inclusive community. Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in our organization helps us live up to our values and achieve greater impact.

Our community is becoming more diverse. We need to reflect these perspectives to be effective.

This is hard work, but as influential people in our community, we have an opportunity to lead the way.

We are part of a growing movement across the country striving to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and the resources they need to thrive—regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

How can greater diversity, equity, and inclusion benefit your organization? Commit to an action plan.

IMPACT STORY TEMPLATE

Stories put our work into human terms and make it come alive. Sharing stories in a variety of contexts—in everyday conversations, presentations, and on websites—will make our message more meaningful. When you tell community leaders stories about others who have taken action to advance DEI, it helps them understand how this effort can increase effectiveness.

The following template may be helpful in crafting stories about how your organization, or one you are familiar with, has taken steps to advance DEI. It asks a series of questions aimed at structuring a story about impact—demonstrating how DEI can help organizations better achieve their missions.

- Describe the organization who chose to advance DEI: What is their mission? What aspect of DEI did they choose to work on?
- Why did they think this was important to do?
- How did they do it? (Did they use any specific resources? Did they establish a specific process?) How did this impact staff?
- How did it impact customers/clients/populations they serve?
- How did it help them better achieve their mission?

SAMPLE IMPACT STORY

This sample story explains why a family foundation chose to diversify its board of trustees—and how it successfully invited new perspectives to the table.

The Surdna Foundation is one of the country's oldest family foundations. It is dedicated to fostering sustainable communities in the United States, and seeks to advance social justice, healthy environments, and thriving economies and cultures. Diversity and inclusion are important values to Surdna—but it can often be challenging to advance these ideas in a family foundation because leadership often remains within the control of the founding family.

In 2010, Surdna saw an opportunity to live out its public commitment to diversity and inclusion when three non-family trustees rotated off the board. The replacement directors needed to match their predecessors in passion and insight, and they had to prove they could effectively handle the Surdna mission of fostering just and sustainable communities.

Surdna worked with an executive search firm to broaden the scope of its pool of candidates beyond its existing professional networks. The search firm assembled a list of candidates based on diversity of experiences and expertise and—in a four-month process—the Surdna board selected three new leaders.

This rigorous approach ensured that Surdna had more diverse perspectives around the table to help solve tough problems. It also helped Surdna live up to its social justice mission—and more effectively carry it out.

LESSONS-LEARNED STORY TEMPLATE

Starting a conversation with a story about a mistake that you made in your own efforts to advance DEI—and how you learned from it—can make other people feel more comfortable taking the first step. Advancing DEI can be a challenge, and it's important to know that others have made mistakes along the way, and overcame them.

The following template may be helpful in telling a story about learning from a mistake.

- Describe the goal you were trying to achieve: Where were you working? Why did you set that goal? What impact did you envision?
- What aspect of DEI did that goal relate to, and why was that important to you or your organization? What did you do to achieve that goal? Were there any challenges?
- When did you realize you had made a mistake? How did that make you feel? Describe how your mistake impacted you, your peers, and your institution.
- How did you respond to making a mistake?
- What lesson did you learn? How has that affected your work today?

SAMPLE LESSONS-LEARNED STORY

This sample story illustrates how Kelly Brown, the director of D5, learned from a mistake she made as a young professional.

Early in my career, I worked for a small foundation in the Bay Area. One of my biggest responsibilities there was to organize a tour of local organizations for visiting funders, board members, and other key stakeholders, to demonstrate the impact of our foundation and grantees. I spent a lot of time ensuring that the day would go perfectly, and showcased our impact in diverse communities.

When the day finally came, our group piled into a bus and embarked on our Bay Area tour—visiting organizations that served a variety of different constituencies. We concluded our tour in an auditorium, where everyone congregated to enjoy a meal and reflect on the day's events. I stepped onto the stage glowing with pride at our success—feeling certain that everyone had enjoyed their experience and felt that their diverse interests had helped shape the event.

Then a man in a wheel chair moved toward the center of the room and announced, “I have something to say.” I welcomed his feedback, expecting nothing but praise. He declared that he had felt completely excluded from the entire experience: When the rest of us boarded the bus, he had to arrange his own transport to trail the rest of the group; when we visited each organization, he had to wait outside because the venues were not accessible. He could neither hear nor contribute to our conversations. He was a long-time activist on many of the issues we discussed—and we had left him out.

I was mortified. I had thought very carefully about including diverse groups in our tour—but I had overlooked one that was not directly connected to me. In doing so, I had not only disappointed the man who spoke to me that day, but other people with disabilities who are extremely important parts of my life. But that excruciating experience made me a better grantmaker. Adding these voices to our process and analysis uncovered gaps in the work of many good organizations—and by pushing these organizations to address their gaps, we helped them become more effective.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is DEI relevant to my mission?

Think about all of the people involved in the areas you work in—and think about all the aspects of diversity. Are there people in the community you serve that have unique needs? For example, if your mission is to advance the arts in your community, are there people with disabilities who could be better served by your efforts? For instance, is their perspective represented on your board? Are your events accessible?

Even if DEI doesn't seem immediately relevant to your niche, thinking about the specific, diverse needs of your community can help you be more effective and better achieve your mission.

How do I know this will improve my effectiveness?

Research shows that diversity and inclusion fuel innovation. Having a variety of voices at the table will help you better identify real-world solutions, because these solutions are informed by all the people they are intended to serve. Inclusion and diversity are good for business.

How do I approach this issue if my staff are uncomfortable discussing it?

Show your team that you are willing to create a safe space to talk about these issues. One powerful thing many leaders have done is to share their own stories about mistakes they have made in this area—like a community they overlooked inadvertently—and what they learned from it. Those kinds of stories make everyone feel comfortable talking about this in a less guarded way. It's also helpful to ensure that everyone—at all staff levels—feels included by inviting them to participate in the conversation.

If I choose to take this on, how do I measure success?

It's not easy, but you'll need to set your own measure of success. There is no single gold standard. For example, many organizations have set a goal to ensure that staff and boards reflect the demographics of their communities proportionally.

However you do it, you should see each accomplishment as a milestone to celebrate.

FAQs (CONTINUED)

I want to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in my organization. How do I do it? [Note: Two possible answers have been provided below. The second option will be most useful for a champion with deep knowledge of DEI.]

1. Organizational change starts with aligning your staff around your priorities through meaningful conversations—and continues through the implementation of policies and practices that affect hiring, policies and procedures.
2. Many organizations have successfully made changes in some or all of these areas, and have useful knowledge to share. Contact Inclusive Dubuque to connect to other leaders working towards common goals.

How does collecting and reporting data on internal diversity benefit my organization?

Being transparent about who we work with signals to the community that we value diversity and want to attract employees who share that value and motivate others to advance it.

Being transparent about who is on our staff and boards is a way to show people that we take diversity and inclusion seriously. New staff will only want to join our team if they can see themselves as part of it.

And collecting and reporting data can also motivate our peers to keep up. We often measure our success in comparison to the success of our peers—so sharing data with the field can encourage others to tout their own impact metrics, and can increase the accountability and transparency of our work.

How can we create an organization that is more welcoming to others?

First, be transparent about who works at your organization. Second, highlight your values. If you value diversity, equity and inclusion make a statement on your website.

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www.inclusivedbq.org

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