

Diving into Intersectionality: Ensuring Best Practices & Fostering an Inclusive Work Environment

Resources to help you get started or continue Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Access at your organization.

If you'd like more information about Gesher's DEI Taskforce, DEI training for your agency, or have questions about the materials here, please contact Carie Branch cbranch@geshermi.org

Definitions

Ally – someone who supports a group other than one's own

Bias – a form of prejudice that results from our need to quickly classify individuals into categories

Cultural Appropriation – the nonconsensual or misappropriate use of cultural elements for commodification purposes without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the context of its originating culture

Decolonize – the active and intentional process of unlearning values, beliefs and conceptions that have caused physical, emotional, or mental harm to people through colonization and systems of oppression

Diversity – socially refers to the wide range of identities. Broadly includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, ideas, perspectives, and values

Discrimination – the unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favors one group over another

Equity – the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups

Implicit Bias – negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold and that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions

Inclusion – the act of creating an environment in which any individual or group will be welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member

Intersectionality – a social construct that recognizes the fluid diversity of identities that a person can hold such as gender, race, class, religion, professional, socioeconomic, or marital status etc.

Oppression – the systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures

Privilege – exclusive access to material and immaterial resources based on membership to a dominant social group



Intersectionality Check-In this list is inexhaustive and just a jumping off point:

Gender

Male
Female
Non-binary
Genderqueer
Genderfluid
Other

Race/Ethnicity

White/Caucasian
Black/African American
Asian
Hispanic/Latinx
Native
American/Indigenous
Multiracial/Mixed
Other

Age

Under 18
18-25
26-35
36-50
51-65
65+

Faith/Spirituality

Christianity
Islam
Judaism
Hinduism
Buddhism
Atheism
Agnosticism
Other

Nationality/Citizenship

USA
Canada
UK
Australia
Other (please specify):

Education

High School Graduate
College Graduate
Postgraduate Degree
No College Education

Family Background

Parents are divorced/separated
Single-Parent Household
Blended Family
Other (please specify):

Socioeconomic Status

Low-income
Middle-income
High-income

Ability/Disability

Able-bodied
Physical Disability (please specify):
Neurodivergent
Other

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual/Straight
Homosexual/Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Pansexual
Asexual
Other

Language(s) Spoken

English
Spanish
Mandarin
Arabic
Other (please specify):

Geographic Location

Urban
Suburban
Rural
Other

Marital Status

Single
Married
Divorced
Widowed
Domestic Partnership
Monogamous
Polyamorous
Polygamous

Parental Status

Parent
Not a Parent
Children are adopted
Children were conceived by IVF
Children were conceived naturally
Raised siblings or other family members

Occupation/Profession

Unemployed
Underemployed
White collar
Blue collar
Trades
Service Industry
Physical Labor

Immigrant Status

Immigrant
First-generation immigrant
Second-generation immigrant
Non-immigrant

Indigenous Heritage

Indigenous heritage or ancestry
Connection to a specific Indigenous community

Refugee or Asylum

Seeker Status
Refugee
Asylum seeker
Not applicable

Military Service

Veteran
Active-duty military
Family member of a service member
Not connected to the military

Gender Identity

Cisgender (identifying with the sex assigned at birth)
Transgender
Gender nonconforming
Questioning

Health Status

Chronic health condition
Long-term disability
Physical health concerns
Mental health concerns
No significant health concerns

Educational Background

Attended public school

Attended private school
Homeschooled
Graduated high school
Technical/vocational education
College Degree
Advanced College Degree
Some college (incomplete)

Body Size/Shape

Plus-size
Body-positive advocate
Athletic build
Slim

Political Affiliation

Democrat
Republican
Independent
Other

Language Proficiency

Bilingual
Multilingual
Non-native English speaker

Caregiver

Responsibilities
Caregiver for children
Caregiver for elderly family members
Caregiver for individuals with disabilities
Not a caregiver

Social Media Presence

Active on social media platforms
Limited or no social media presence
Questioning

LGBTQ+ Allyship

Active LGBTQ+ ally
Learning about LGBTQ+ issues
Not connected to LGBTQ+ issues

Technology Use

Tech-savvy
Limited technology use
Digital divide awareness

Questions for Consideration When Determining Your Agency's "WHY"

DEI Action Plans are just as unique as the people that make them and the organizations they serve. It's essential to know what you want to achieve before you start your Action Plan.

Gather your team and discuss some of the following questions. Though this conversation, you should have a better idea of some challenges and areas for improvement that your agency would like to focus on. Do you need to invest in building improvements for accessibility, or review policies and procedures for equity? Do you need to write a Cultural Competency Plan to ensure services are provided with respect? Your Action Plan will be driven by the "why" of you work.

- What's your definition of diversity and what is your understanding of it?
- What makes you feel valued?
- How do you celebrate meaningful events and success?
- Have you ever felt marginalized or excluded due to your race, ethnicity, heritage, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, class, economic status, education level, etc.?
- How comfortable do feel bringing your whole authentic self to work?
- How comfortable do the people you serve feel bringing their whole authentic selves to work?
- Do you feel your perspective is valued and heard by your team in meetings and discussions?
- Have you ever felt discrimination or bias in the workplace?
- Have you ever witnessed microaggressions or other harmful behaviors in the workplace?
- Do you feel your agency's hiring practices are inclusive?
- Are there policies around nondiscrimination?
- Do you feel your agency values creating a diverse workforce?
- Does your organization provide resources and support to staff and people served in an equitable way?
- Does your organization's mission align with DEI objectives?

Action Plan Sample

Below is a blank version of Gesher’s Action Plan. All objectives feed into the unifying goal, and have a person responsible, a desired outcome, anticipated completion, and tracking. Our committee reviews our Action Plan regularly, adding or editing goals as they are completed or no longer relevant. Feel free to use any elements that might be a good fit for your agency.

Unifying Goal: Create and sustain a work culture that welcomes diversity by treating all people with dignity and respect.					
	Required Actions & Strategies	Champion of Action(s)	Measurable Indicators of Success/ Desired Outcome	Timeline for Completion	Tracking Progress: Achievement
Objective	What will be done?	Who will lead the action(s)	What will be the evidence of success?	By when? (Day/Month)	Y(yes) N(no) O(ongoing)
The marketing image of Gesher will reflect its workforce	A. All Gesher websites, social media and printed material will reflect diversity and inclusive language.				
Staff will be able to inform the CEO/COO/Board of concerns or suggestions for agency improvement	A. Implement suggestion boxes & ensure follow up				
	B. Ensure that staff knows how to make suggestions to the board (staff advisory committee)				
Treat all with dignity and respect, making that the norm amongst staff as well as toward participants, and infusing all we do with Gesher Core Values	A. Implement 7 Norms of Collaborative work				
	B. Teach Culture of Gentleness philosophy to all employees				
	C. Highlight/Training on the agency's Core Values				
	D. Explore anti-bias/implicit bias survey/education				
	E. Facilitate sign language training for all staff				
To build awareness of unisex bathrooms throughout the agency	A. DEI Taskforce will create a communication for all staff indicating location of unisex bathrooms				
	B. DEI Taskforce will follow up with HR regarding onboarding				

	C. Improve signage				
	D. Mention at a staff meeting				
	E. Ensure unisex bathrooms are labelled on Agency floorplan				
To create an effective & safe conflict resolution process	A. Human Resources & Agency Leadership will review the process and ensure confidentiality and effectiveness.				
	B. Staff will be educated about the process				
	C. any retaliation in response to a report of conflict will be addressed immediately by Human Resources and Leadership				
To educate agency staff regarding discrimination complaints	A. All agency policies will be in one place				
	B. SOPs will be reviewed regarding harassment, anti-bullying and discrimination.				
	C. Process to safely address complaints of discrimination, anti-bullying or harassment will be developed and disseminated to staff				
To create a means for the DEI Taskforce to share ideas, education & resources with agency staff	A. DEI Taskforce will have time at each all staff meeting.				
	B. DEI will communicate through email to all agency staff no less than once per quarter.				
To create an internal career progression framework	A. Train managers & supervisors to identify staff with potential for growth.				
	B. Offer continued education and development opportunities for staff				
	C. Create a system whereby staff can apply for Incompass Leadership Academy				

To have an effective and supported management team	A. Reinstate HR manager/supervisor trainings.				
	B. Include anti-bias training for HR team, leadership and hiring managers				
To inform all staff of HR projects and opportunities	A. HR will have a permanent spot on the all agency meeting to share information				
To ensure that vendors and partners align with the agency's DEI goals	A. Add a weighted line to vendor bid form				
	B. Evaluate potential vendors for DEI friendly policies (parental leave/LGBTQIA or minority owned)				
All agency forms will reflect the agency's DEI goals	A. All Agency forms will be updated to include all gender pronouns				
Staff will be familiar with their counterparts/ other staff in different parts of the agency	A. Quarterly opportunities for teambuilding among mid-level managers.				
	B. Reinstigate Agency mentorship program				
	C. Create opportunities for cross department team-building				
To have a clear actionable DEI plan for the agency	A. Create a DEI plan b. get plan approved by agency leadership				
	B. Research the value of a consultant for the agency and make a recommendation				
	C. Share the approved plan with all stakeholders				
To educate the Agency's Board about DEI objectives & goals	A. Share the approved DEI plan				
	B. Educate the Board about the value of diversity in Board structure & diversity in the donor base				

To create a comprehensive strategic plan for the agency that includes DEI objectives	A. quarterly meetings involving all aspects of the agency that are working on strategic planning				
	B. Create an agency "podcast" facilitated by the CEO to share information related to Mission, Vision & Values				
To be knowledgeable about Best Practices in the field of DEI	A. DEI Taskforce will form a sub-committee to reach out to and participate with other agencies doing DEI work				
	B. Research the value of a DEI consultant for the agency and make a recommendation				

Resources for Self-Reflection

Harvard's Implicit Bias Tests: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>
 Equity Habit Building – choose one activity a day to begin changing your patterns of complacency: <https://www.debbyriving.com/21-day-challenge-2022-archive/>

Suggested Reading List

Self-education is the best way you can engage in DEI work. The following reading list has been compiled through Geshert's *Inclusion* newsletter over the last year. Each month we choose a few awareness initiatives and highlight literature written by those communities. Many books are suggestions from our committee, staff, people we serve, and other diverse contributors.

Racism

How To Be An Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi
White Fragility by Robin Diangelo
So You Want To Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo
Wellbeing Handbook for Overcoming Everyday Racism by Susan Cousins

Civility

Nonviolent Communication by Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD
Beyond Civility by William Keith
Talking to Strangers by Malcolm Gladwell
Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson
Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication by Oren Sofer

Minority Mental Health

Decolonizing Wellness by Dalia Kinsey
The Pain We Carry by Natalie Y. Gutiérrez
Self-Care for Black Women: 150 Ways to Radically Accept & Prioritize Your Mind, Body, and Soul
by Oludara Adeeyo
Therapy Isn't Just for White People by Kiara Imani
What My Bones Know: a Memoir of Healing From Complex Trauma by Stephanie Do

Mental Health

Furiously Happy: A Funny Book about Horrible Things by Jenny Lawson
Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive by Marc Brackett
Reasons to Stay Alive by Matt Haig
I'm Telling the Truth but I'm Lying by Bassey Ikpi
Swallow Me Whole by Nate Powell

For Survivors of Suicide Attempts

Waking Up Alive by R. A. Heckler
Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt by Hines & Reidenberg

For Survivors of a Loved One's Suicide

No way to behave at a funeral: A tale of personal loss through suicide by Victoria Glen Waverly
Do they have bad days in heaven? Surviving the suicide loss of a sibling by Chellehead Works
Albuquerque

Autism

Fall Down 7 Times Get Up 8 by Naoki Higashida
In a Different Key by John Donvan and Caren Zucker
Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity by Devon Price
Neurotribes: The Legacy Of Autism And The Future Of Neurodiversity by Steve Silberman
I Overcame My Autism and All I Got Was This Lousy Anxiety Disorder: A Memoir by Sarah Kurchak
"Funny, You Don't Look Autistic" by Michael McCreary

Developmental Disability

Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity by Simi Linton
The Missing Kennedy: Rosemary Kennedy and the secret bonds of four women by Elizabeth
Koehler-Pentacoff
Don't Call Me Inspirational: A Disabled Feminist Talks Back by Harilyn Rousso
Autism in Heels by Jennifer Cook
Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of A Disability Rights Activist by Judith E. Heumann
Deaf Republic by Ilya Kaminsky
Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law by Girma Haben
More Alike Than Different: My Life with Down Syndrome by David Egan
Concussion by Jeanne Marie Laskas
The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language by John McWhorter

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

You're Welcome, Universe by Whitney Gardner
Wonderstruck by Brian Selznick
Silent Ears, Silent Heart by Blair LaCrosse
The Goblin Road by Lewis J. Parrish
Seeing Voices by Oliver Sacks

Arab American Heritage

The Wrong End of the Table: A Mostly Comic Memoir of a Muslim Arab American Woman Just Trying to Fit in by Ayser Salman
Arabiyya: Recipes from the Life of an Arab in Diaspora by Reem Assil
Three Women by Lisa Taddeo

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage

Oh My Mother! by Connie Wang
Stay True by Hua Hsu
Fairest by Meredith Talusan
Speak, Okinawa by Elizabeth Miki Brina
Time Is a Mother by Ocean Vuong

Black Heritage

The Autobiography of Malcom X. by Malcom X
I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
Eloquent Rage by Brittney Cooper
This Will Be My Undoing by Morgan Jerkins
I'm Still Here by Austin Channing Brown
All About Love: New Visions by bell hooks
Another Country by James Baldwin
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
Heavy by Kiese Laymon
Dark Matter: A Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora by various authors

Black Music

808s and Otherworlds: Memories, Remixes & Mythologies by Sean Avery Medlin
Dilla Time: The Life and Afterlife of J Dilla, The Hip Hop Producer Who Reinvented Rhythm by Dan Charnas
The Spirit of Music by Victor L. Wooten
One Nation Under A Groove: Motown and American Culture by Gerald Early
Shine Bright: A Very Personal History of Black Women in Pop by Danyel Smith

Jewish Heritage

Once We Were Slaves: The Extraordinary Journey of a Multi-Racial Jewish Family by Laura Arnold Leibman

Coming to Terms with America: Essays on Jewish History, Religion, and Culture by Jonathan D Sarna

Kugel and Frijoles: Latino Jews in the United States by Laura Limonic

Speaking Yiddish to Chickens: Holocaust Survivors on South Jersey Poultry Farms by Seth Stern

The American Way: A True Story of Nazi Escape, Superman, and Marilyn Monroe by Helene Stapinski and Bonnie Siegler

Haitian Heritage

The Haitians: A Deconcolonial History by Jean Casimir

Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work by Edwidge Danticat

Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women by Myriam J.A. Chancy

Confronting Black Jacobins: The U.S., the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic by Gerald Horne

Haiti My Country by Rogé

Women's History

Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning by Cathy Park Hong

The Radium Girls by Kate Moore

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan

Bad Feminist by Roxanne Gay

Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men by Caroline Criado Perez

Circe by Madeline Miller

Becoming by Michelle Obama

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

Detransition, Baby by Torrey Peters

The Night Watchman by Louise Erdrich

Wow, No Thank You by Samantha Irby

The Megillah (Book of Esther) by various authors

Pride

The Stonewall Reader by The New York Public Library

Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and The Rainbow Flag by Rob Sanders and Steven Salern

We Are Everywhere by Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown

The Crane Wife by CJ Hauser

Tomorrow Will Be Different by Sarah McBride

Sissy by Jacob Tobia

We Have Always Been Here by Samra Habib