



ROADMAP FOR AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Tips, tools, and resources for business leaders to assess their workplace culture and design an action plan to foster a more inclusive organization.

arvadachamber.org
(303) 424-0313

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized and interconnected world, the importance of fostering inclusive workplaces cannot be overstated. An inclusive workplace is one that values and respects the diversity of its employees, recognizing their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This approach is not just about fairness and equity; it's a strategic imperative that fuels business success on multiple fronts. A recent study showed that organizations with inclusive cultures are six times more likely to be innovative and agile than those with non-inclusive cultures. By embracing inclusivity, companies can tap into a vast pool of talent, ideas, and creativity that leads to increased profitability, innovation, and overall success.

Inclusive workplaces contribute significantly to the bottom line. When employees feel valued and accepted for who they are, they are more engaged, motivated, and loyal. This heightened sense of belonging directly translates into improved productivity and reduced turnover rates, saving businesses significant resources associated with recruitment and training. Moreover, diverse teams bring a wealth of ideas and viewpoints to the table, enhancing problem-solving capabilities and enabling companies to better understand and cater to a wide range of customer needs. This agility and responsiveness to a diverse marketplace provide a competitive edge that drives sustained growth and increased profits.

Innovation thrives in inclusive environments. The collision of different perspectives sparks creativity and leads to the development of groundbreaking solutions. Inclusive workplaces encourage open dialogue and the sharing of diverse viewpoints, challenging conventional thinking and fostering a culture of continuous learning. This dynamic atmosphere not only fuels innovation but also attracts top-tier talent that seeks opportunities to grow and contribute meaningfully. As the business landscape evolves, adaptability is key, and diverse teams have proven time and again to be more adaptable and resilient in the face of change.

Critics who dismiss the value of inclusive workplaces often misunderstand the economics behind diversity and inclusion. Some argue that prioritizing diversity lowers meritocracy, but in reality, an inclusive workplace doesn't compromise excellence; it enhances it. Inclusive hiring practices widen the talent pool, allowing for the recruitment of the most qualified individuals. Furthermore, the notion that inclusion is a form of "political correctness" is unfounded. It's a strategic business move backed by research, which consistently shows that diverse teams outperform homogenous ones. Inclusive workplaces aren't about quotas; they're about unlocking human potential and driving innovation and growth. In the end, embracing diversity isn't just the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do for business success in the 21st century.



VANESSA KENDRICK

Arvada Chamber of Commerce
Board Chair and
Inclusion & Belonging KAPS
Council Member

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THE CASE FOR INCLUSION

Why is the Arvada Chamber focused on Inclusion & Belonging work?

This roadmap was designed by the Arvada Chamber’s Inclusion & Belonging (I&B) KAPS Council. The business and community leaders on this council work diligently to advance the Chamber’s I&B commitment. By creating an inclusive environment, the Chamber’s vision in this work is to empower new perspectives, solutions, and opportunities for our local economy and serve as a champion for advancing all businesses and employees in Arvada.

In a recent survey of Arvada businesses, half of respondents answered “Knowledge and understanding of how to implement” as the top challenge for I&B actions for their business. In terms of resources that would be helpful, 70% of respondents answered “A roadmap for inclusive workplace culture.”



Why should inclusion matter for my business or the economy?

The Arvada Chamber understands that fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion of people from different backgrounds and perspectives is essential for our local economy to thrive. Recent Gartner research reveals that “differences of age, ethnicity, gender and other dimensions foster high performance.” Teams with diverse thinkers are shown to drive success through innovation, talent retention, and market expansion.

In addition, companies with above-average diversity scores see 19% more “innovation revenue” (revenue generated from improved or entirely new products) than those with below-average diversity scores. Also, 67% of job seekers say a diverse workforce is a crucial factor when evaluating job offers and ultimately choosing employment.

Your leadership team must make both a moral and a business case for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) if they want to get everyone on board. Inclusion has to be given the same attention and commitment as any other aspect of business that drives the bottom line.

Source: Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania “[How Inclusion Helps Companies Succeed](#)”

CULTURAL AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

A first key step in raising inclusion practices at your business is to assess your cultural environment and individual environment. Businesses can use local demographic information not just to better target customers, but to plan their workforce more effectively. This includes hiring employees who reflect the diversity of the local community, accommodating cultural and linguistic differences, and understanding local labor market dynamics.

ARVADA DEMOGRAPHICS

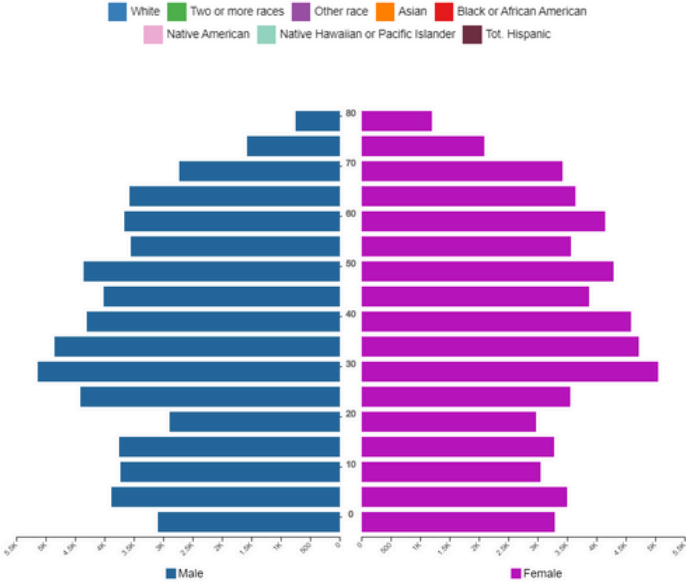
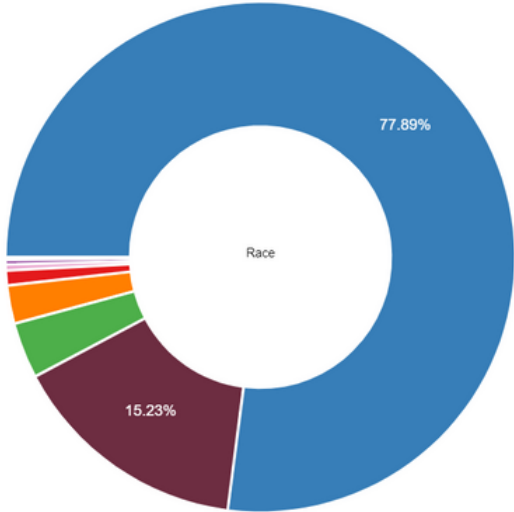
Colorado's racial demographics reflect an evolving and diverse population, influenced by a combination of historical factors, migration trends, and new economic opportunities. Today, Arvada is represented by a 78% white alone population. Latinos make up about 15% of the Arvada population, followed by two or more races (3.1%), Asian (2.2%) and Black (.9%).

About 5.11% of Arvada is foreign-born, much lower than the state (9.5%) and national total (13.6%). However both Jefferson County (6.25%) and Adams County (14.8%) as a whole have higher percentages of foreign-born citizens.

The median age in Arvada is 40, much higher than the median age of 37 across Colorado. Roughly 21% of the population is under 18 and about 17% of the population is over 65.

Just over 7,000 Arvadans (5.6%) are Veterans and about 6.5% of Arvadans under 65 have a disability. These figures are slightly lower than the state and national averages.

Source: www.census.gov.



DIVERSITY ACROSS COLORADO

In this section, dive deeper into the history and data of various populations that make up Colorado and define today's current business and culture climate.

Indigenous Peoples

The first people in the Arvada area were tribes of Native Americans. Cheyenne and Arapaho camped along a stream, later named Ralston Creek, and used the land for hunting and fishing. Today, about 54,000 people, or roughly one percent of Colorado's population, identify as Native American (which also includes Alaskan native). The vast majority live in the urban areas; descendants of the Cheyenne, Lakota, Kiowa, Navajo, and at least 200 tribal nations live in the Denver Metro Area.

African Americans

Colorado's Black population has increased by 32,532 to 221,310 a 17% increase over the last decade. People who identify as Black are 3.8% of Colorado's population, a slight increase from 3.75% in 2010. The growth of this group represents about 4.4% of Colorado's total growth over the decade. In the US, the Black population increased by 2.2 million or 6%.

According to the Center for Talent Innovation's study, Black men are two-and-a-half times more likely to be satisfied with their job and intend to stay if the company has moderated forums to discuss race. In a study of Canadians of color, of those who are highly "on guard" at work (anticipating and consciously preparing for potential bias or discrimination), 50% to 69% have a high intent to leave their jobs.

Latinos

In Colorado, Latinos constitute the second largest racial or ethnic group, comprising 22% of the population. This surpasses the national share of Latinos by four percentage points (18%). Since 2000, the Latino population in Colorado has surged by 72%, doubling the state's overall population growth of 35%. Notably, Latinos in Colorado are notably younger than the average resident. The median age for Latino Coloradans stands at 28 years old, compared to 36 for the state's overall population. Moreover, 20% of Latinos in Colorado are aged 10 or younger, in contrast to just 14% of the state population.

Educationally, more than one-quarter of Latinos in Colorado (27%) did not complete high school, a rate three times higher than the state average (9%). Despite this, Latino Coloradans exhibit higher levels of educational attainment than their national counterparts (31% did not complete high school).

In terms of labor force participation, Latino men in Colorado have the highest rate at 79% among all racial and ethnic gender groups. Conversely, Latina women have the second lowest labor force participation rate, both among women and overall, at 63%, with only AAPI women participating at a lower rate (62%).



Women

Today, 19.3% of businesses in Arvada are women-owned, higher than the state (16.7%) and national (14.2%) figures. However, the “broken rung” is still holding back women across the country. For every 100 men promoted to manager, only 86 women are promoted. As a result, men significantly outnumber women at the manager level, which means there are far fewer women to promote to higher levels.

When women successfully move into leadership roles, their day-to-day experiences often get more difficult. They are also more likely to face microaggressions that challenge their competence, such as being interrupted, hearing comments on their emotional state, or having their judgment questioned.

LGBTQ+

There were 980,276 same-sex couple households in the U.S., according to the Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Of these, 58% were married couples. Colorado ranks 10th in states with the highest percentage of same-sex couple households. The Dever metro has the 8th highest percentage of same-sex couple households in the United States.

The median household income for married same-sex couples was \$107,200 in 2019, much higher than the overall national average of \$68,703. Among all couples married or unmarried, same-sex couples were more likely than opposite-sex couples to have both members employed in 2019. Same-sex couples: 65.1%. Opposite-sex couples: 51%. According to a U.S. Census Bureau analysis of Current Population Survey data, 14.7% of same-sex couples have children in their household.

Americans with Disabilities

Disability is defined as a physical or mental condition that impairs someone's ability to do certain activities. A disability can be clearly noticeable, like someone who doesn't have hands and feet. But a disability can also be invisible, like someone with an intellectual disability. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four adults in Colorado have a disability.

Older Americans

In Colorado, nearly a quarter of individuals aged 65 or older remain employed, a figure that has doubled since 2000, according to data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. Projections indicate that between 2010 and 2040, the proportion of workers over 54 years old in Colorado will increase from one in five to almost one in four.

Despite the valuable skills, experience, and knowledge that older workers bring to the table, they often face discrimination and job insecurity due to their age. Recognizing and leveraging the potential of older workers is crucial in adapting to this demographic shift. However, a 2020 survey by AARP revealed that while 74% of employers surveyed expressed a willingness to provide training and lifelong learning opportunities for older workers, only 6% had established unbiased recruitment processes as of December 2020.





ENVIRONMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

The diversity of your personal and professional environment can play a role in how you recognize, understand, and intentionally elevate groups of people at your workplace. We recommend the following two tools to table-set your cultural environment, both of which may be helpful to share with your team as well.

1. Intersectionality Score Calculator | intersectionalityscore.com

You may have heard of intersectionality: "The theory that the overlap of various social identities, such as race, gender, and sexuality, define your level of systemic oppression." With this tool, you can easily identify those who may have unique, and most often overlooked or disregarded perspectives.

2. How Diverse is Your Universe | arvadachamber.org/diverseuniverse

The purpose of this activity is to think about day-to-day interactions and the level of diversity with which you surround yourself. The directions are simple: View a series of prompts about the people you engage with regularly. For each individual, you'll place a bead or candy in your glass. Each color stands for a group of people (Ex: Yellow - African American, Green - LGBTQ+). Some individuals may be included in more than one group.

Once done with all the prompts, look into your cup and ask yourself:

- How diverse is my universe?
- Did you ever stop to think of how often you communicate with people outside of your group?
- Did you consider yourself to be someone who often interacted with others? Do you still?
- What did your visual representation show you?
- If you have little to no exposure to others, do you think you should make an effort to be more involved? If so, how?



START THE CONVERSATION

Starting the conversation is what allows businesses to create welcoming and safe spaces for all individuals in the organization. Why is this important for your success?

- Organizational longevity is dependent on employee satisfaction.
- Increased employee satisfaction and engagement fosters greater loyalty, retention, productivity, and overall performance.
- Stakeholders such as customers and investors are increasingly aligning their decisions with social values like employee well-being.
- Diverse, lived, and professional experiences lead to smarter, more intentional, and higher-quality organizational decision-making.

Having the conversation is a crucial element of leadership. Many leaders hesitate because they don't know where to begin or how to bring up subjects that they are not experts in. Starting the conversation is a series of four steps that can promote and foster equity and belonging with priority employee groups:

1. Awareness

Know the data, conduct self-identification surveys, understand employee challenges, needs and barriers to success, and learn about leading practice.

2. Action

Conduct a listening tour that includes 1-on-1 coffee chats with employees and/or focus group sessions. Ask intentional questions, be open to criticism, and provide multiple mediums for discussion such as in-person conversations as well as anonymous channels for communication.

3. Accountability

Review the collected data, promote transparency in sharing the current state results, ensure accountability by sharing the desired future state, ask employees to hold each other and leaders accountable, and set goals and metrics.

4. Again

Repeat the process and be open to iterations. Keep educating yourself and others, take courageous actions to challenge systemic barriers, and demonstrate humility throughout.

DESIGNING YOUR ACTION PLAN

Many of you reading this are somewhere along the journey toward cultivating a sense of belonging for all employees; some of you are far along and ahead of the crowd, while others are just embarking on it. If you are just starting with the conversation at your business, it is important to approach starting the conversation with humility and an understanding that simply breaking the ice is not enough. You must continue to educate yourself and others, and commit to ongoing dialogue on the importance and impact of inclusion and belonging in the workplace.

Below is a simple map for action steps when starting your inclusion journey.

Stages	Definition	In Action
Commitment	Make a commitment to courageous inclusion goals that will transform your organization and are embedded in your business strategy.	Set your inclusion goals and map them against your 5- to 10-year business strategies with clearly defined metrics for success.
Communication	<p>Share your commitments with your employees, customers, and other stakeholders to encourage transparency and build trust.</p> <p>Start the conversation to create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for employees.</p>	<p>Showcase these goals through varying channels such as employee newsletters, company intranet site, external website, and social media platforms.</p> <p>Before conversations begin, set up clearly defined ground rules, including: A culture of respect for all participants and their place on the learning journey Space to speak and be heard without interruption.</p>
Continuous	Create a structure to receive continuous feedback to ensure your inclusion commitments lead to maximum impact and minimal harm.	An anonymous employee feedback survey and regular touchpoints with employees through focus groups and in-person dialogue.

Source: *WhatWorksToolkit – 5030 Challenge. whatworkstoolkit.50-30tools.ca.*

DESIGNING YOUR ACTION PLAN

COMMITMENT

An inclusion plan aligned with leadership's commitment ensures that diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated into the organization's strategic objectives. When leadership is genuinely dedicated to inclusion initiatives, your business can allocate appropriate resources toward implementation and be fully transparent and accountable to its success and sustainability.

1. Secure full Leadership Support

Leadership commitment plays a crucial role and can make a big difference in gaining support from all managers and employees. Inclusion initiatives tend to thrive when leaders wholeheartedly believe in them and make it a priority to communicate that belief to stakeholders.

2. Make it an Important Function

Inclusion should hold the same level of importance within your organization as functions like marketing, finance, and sales. Ideally, it should be led by a dedicated professional for the best results. In smaller organizations where a full-time role might not be feasible, HR leaders can take the lead, supported by a committee or council, while the CEO/leader actively champions the cause.

3. Make it Financially Viable

Every inclusion initiative should make financial sense. They should either save your organization money or contribute additional revenues.

Examples of cost reductions:

- Lower turnover rate through increased employee engagement
- Reduced cost of absenteeism, disgruntled employees and sick leave
- Engaged employees are more productive

Examples of increased revenue:

- Improving sales by adapting products and services to new markets
- Reaching new markets
- Innovation leading to new products or services



DESIGNING YOUR ACTION PLAN

COMMUNICATION

After identifying the reasons for investing in inclusion for your business, the next step is to develop a strategy document that outlines how you plan to achieve your goals.

1. Mission and Vision Statements

Incorporate inclusion into your existing mission and vision statements. If these statements don't already reflect your commitment to inclusion, consider revising them. This alignment will not only inform your employees, stakeholders, investors, customers, and potential hires about your dedication to inclusion but also emphasize how it ties into your organization's overall vision and mission. Additionally, your organization may want to create a separate DEI mission statement.

Examples:

- Comcast: "We believe that a diverse and inclusive company is a more innovative and successful company, which is why we aim to infuse diversity and inclusion (D&I) into all aspects of our culture and our business. For us, D&I is not a program — it is a central element of our credo and our DNA."
- Lockheed Martin: "We believe that all employees should have a safe and inclusive work environment – one in which everyone is treated fairly, with the highest standards of professionalism, ethical conduct and full compliance with the law. It is the collective voices of our workforce which allows us to continue innovating a vision for a better tomorrow."

2. Long-Term Goals

Align your goal-setting with your organization's existing practices for long-term planning. If your workplace typically formulates five-year goals, adhere to this convention to ensure that your strategy document aligns with the established practices and lends greater credibility to your plan.

Here are some tips for developing long-term strategic objectives and your inclusion strategy:

- Focus on a limited number of priorities
- Engage all levels of the organization with input from all stakeholders
- Share across the organization to foster buy-in
- Encourage integration in daily activities
- Remember to set realistic and measurable goals

Examples:

- In 10 years, become industry leader on influencing inclusion best practices
- Attract and retain workforce that reflects the communities we serve
- Establish mentoring and sponsorship programs
- Increase employee engagement by X%
- Increase representation of specific underrepresented groups at all levels of the organization by X%

DESIGNING YOUR ACTION PLAN

COMMUNICATION

3. Short-Term Goals, Priorities and Initiatives

Setting short-term goals can help to articulate exactly what needs to be done to achieve the long-term strategic objectives. Short-term goals set specific, measurable performance targets and generally can be achieved within one or two years. Remember to set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound) goals.

Examples:

- Communicate the DEI mission, vision and strategy internally and externally
- Implement new measures to establish baseline and gather current state information
- Establish an inclusion council led by the CEO or a member of the C-Suite with representation from all divisions, departments and/or lines of business
- Develop a Diversity Statement
- Establish working committees to focus on specific areas
- Develop partnerships with outside organizations to support inclusion

CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

Like all plans, this plan needs to be reviewed annually to see what improvements can be made. Consider external factors, such as changes in business practices, markets and other changing external environments that need reflection and incorporate updates into the plan every year.

Here are some examples of internally focused measures:

- Employee demographics (gathered through self-identification survey)
- Recruitment, retention, advancement by demographic
- Engagement by demographics
- Tracking of DEI training for managers and employees
- Impact of DEI training on attitudes and behavior change
- Measures of cultural competence for leaders and/or employees

Examples of externally focused measures:

- Demographics of customers, clients and service users
- Retention rates of customers
- Customer satisfaction or engagement by demographic
- Partnerships with community organizations



INCLUSIVE TALENT RECRUITMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Inclusive hiring practices are crucial for businesses for several reasons, including an enhanced reputation, broader talent pool, increased employee retention, and more innovative, diverse thinking. Diversifying the business' staff (and board) is often one of the first steps on its DEI journey. But where should you start? Below are initial considerations for recruiting (and retaining) more diverse talent.



1. Set the Stage

In the job description, focus on skills-based hiring that clarifies the required skills and behaviors for the role. Once you have sifted through qualified resumes, get to know the candidates. Keep the conversation focused on relevant experience, accomplishments, and unique skills they could bring to the role. Lastly, create a positive experience. Seek to make candidates feel comfortable and leave them with a positive experience in your interaction.

2. Plan the Interview

Behavioral based interviewing is considered by many to be the most effective form of interview in nearly any type of organization. This method focuses on a candidate's experience, asking them to provide specific examples of how they have demonstrated certain behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

In preparing for the interview, consider how unconscious bias can play a role. Bias happens when an interviewer makes assumptions about a job candidate based on readily observed criteria rather than objective qualifications. For example, an interviewer may believe that one gender is a better fit for a particular position than another. Or they might assume that one candidate is more responsible based on their race or ethnicity. Keep talking about bias with your team and interview panel members. Reducing bias is a continuous process, not a singular effort.

3. Legal Considerations

Be sure to ask only questions that relate to the position for which the candidate is being considered. Avoid any discussion of unlawful or risky areas during casual conversation with candidates. Apply the selection criteria consistently and equally to all candidates. Finally, maintain accurate, factual, and job-related written notes and documentation of the interview. The below graphic offers a set of guidelines for questions you can and can't ask during the interview process. **View a full list at arvadachamber.org/interviewquestions.**

Topic	You CAN Ask: (Legal Questions)	You CAN'T Ask: (Disciminatory Questions)
Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any responsibilities that conflict with the job attendance or travel requirements? Have you ever been know by/used another name? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you married? What is your maiden name? Do you have any children? Are you pregnant? Are you planning a family?
Race	None	What is your race?
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether or not applicant is able to carry out all necessary job assignments/functions and perform them in a safe manner Ex: "How would you perform this particular task?" 	The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 forbids employers from asking job applicants general questions about whether they are disabled or asking them about the nature and severity of their disabilities.
Religion	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your religion? What are your religious holidays? What workplace changes are needed to accomodate your religion?
Gender/Sex	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you male or female?
Sexual Orientation	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the gender of your partner?

Final Checklist:

- Be prepared to explain the company's mission, highlights, and structure.
- Review the job description and qualifications.
- Consider what biases could be brought to the interview and establish criteria for assessing candidates based on skills, knowledge, and experience required for the job.
- Prepare a standard set of interview questions that reflect the criteria for the position.
- Be familiar with illegal interview questions and remove problematic questions.
- Review the candidate's resume and application materials in advance of the interview.
- Check with the hiring leader to understand how to best assess the candidate's skills.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Inclusive marketing, which emphasizes reaching and resonating with your diverse audiences, has transitioned from a trend to a necessity. Gone are the days when a one-size-fits-all approach could suffice in capturing the hearts and minds of consumers. Instead, successful brands of all sizes are embracing a new approach that celebrates diversity and embraces the power of representation. In this section, we explore considerations for communicating more inclusively with your external marketing channels and internally to your team to foster a greater sense of belonging.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. Always know your audience.

To be inclusive of your audience, ask yourself:

- Who are they?
- What are their backgrounds and experiences?
- What percent of your business do they currently represent? What is the optimal opportunity?
- Where do they find news and information related to your business?
- What are they hoping to learn or acquire?
- What language(s) do they speak?
- How are their purchasing decisions different from other customers?

With this information, build 2-5 customer personas and outreach strategies specific to each audience.

2. Make your communication accessible.

While a lot of the conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion these days focuses on social injustices, it is important to remember that it also refers to ability. So, ensure that everyone can read your emails and website irrespective of their abilities. Some helpful tips:

- Include people of color, people with disabilities, and people of different ages in your images.
- Provide captions or transcripts for audio or video.
- Use contrasting colors and clear labels for on-screen data visualization.
- Give detailed descriptions for images through alt text.
- Avoid animation or video with excessive movement or flashing visuals.
- Ensure your site is compatible with screen readers, mobile devices, and keyboard navigation.
- Ensure all content is ADA compliant.
- If possible, have Spanish speakers/sign language interpreters on staff or at events.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

3. Review the language of key written materials to promote an inclusive environment.

This includes social media content, email marketing, website content, job descriptions, press releases, print materials, and advertising. Some important tips:

- Ensure your writing is free of biases or stereotypes.
- Avoid language that insinuates that being white, straight, or college-educated is the default.
- Favor ungendered language (e.g., “parents” over “mom and dad,” or “server” over “waitress”).
- Diversify the names of hypothetical people.

4. Use diverse imagery where possible.

If you do not have diverse images of your team and customers, could you work to make that happen? If not, be intentional about using stock images and footage of underrepresented people.

5. Focus on tone of voice.

If you need some inspiration, check out the Conscious Style Guide. Here, you will find plenty of resources to help you write about ethnicity, race, nationality, disability, age, gender, sex, and sexuality. consciousstyleguide.com.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. Familiarize yourself and your team with appropriate terminology.

Take time to understand why other terms are hurtful or hateful. Remember to use open, inclusive language. Where possible, ask and share preferred pronouns. Avoid stereotypes, making assumptions or judgments, and inherently discriminatory language. Refer to the person first, such as woman who is deaf vs. deaf woman, people with disabilities vs. disabled people. Where possible, use gender-neutral and welcoming signage in the office.

2. Be intentional and willing.

Purposefully shift your mindset and be honest with your staff and stakeholders about this process. Strategies to being intentional about being a good ally include:

- **Being uncomfortable.** Be open to new information that challenges existing beliefs.
- **Learning and growing.** Read, listen, and absorb on a continuous basis, then apply and practice what you learn. Remember that this is an ongoing effort! Language changes regularly, so continue to pay attention to emerging trends in inclusive language. For now, we love this Harvard glossary of current inclusive terms: arvadachamber.org/InclusiveTerms
- **Accepting feedback.** Part of the learning and growing process means being receptive to how your content affects others. We can't and won't get it right the first time every time. Being a good DEI advocate doesn't mean knowing how to be perfect, but rather knowing how to do better.

RESPONDING TO FEEDBACK ON INCLUSION EFFORTS



The good news: you will find many champions of your inclusion efforts once you start this journey. Unfortunately, not everyone in the community (much less your own team) will be on board. Responding to feedback, good and bad, is a critical step to fostering and promoting a culture of continuous improvement and transparency. Below are tips for responding to all feedback around this important topic.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

1. Express gratitude.

First, acknowledge positive feedback on your company's inclusion efforts. Thank customers or stakeholders for recognizing your commitment to diversity and inclusion.

2. Share impact.

Across your communication channels, briefly highlight the positive outcomes of your inclusion initiatives. Explain how these efforts align with your company's values and mission.

3. Encourage engagement.

Invite customers and stakeholders to continue supporting your inclusion initiatives and promoting your positive stories on their channels. Encourage them to share their ideas and suggestions for further improvement.

PUSHBACK, NEGATIVE FEEDBACK, AND INDIFFERENCE

1. People often feel threatened by what they don't understand.

- Threat to individual identity: "But I'm not racist."
- Threat to social identity: "I'm being shamed for being a man, white, etc."
- Threat to status: "More for others equals less for me."
- Threat to merit: "I got to where I am because I work hard, not because I'm white."
- Threat to morals: "There's no work for me to do because I believe everyone is equal."

We must first understand these threats in order to overcome pushback.

2. Three types of pushback (Three D's)

1. Denial: "This is not a problem."
2. Disengagement: "This is not my problem."
3. Derailment: "What about other problems?"

3. Dealing with pushback

- **Communicate and validate.** "Tailor your communication to create transparency about why a specific program is being rolled out and the preceding events that make the case for it." Do not invalidate the feelings of those who have not bought in. Anticipate the threats they may perceive and respond with empathy. Engage in affirmation to help the person pushing back to open up and be more receptive. Remember: don't apologize for your mission and authenticity!
- **Foster empathy and create awareness.** "A lack of empathy for marginalized groups often enhances the threat perceptions that drive pushback. Learning activities to build empathy and awareness of other groups' experiences can help diminish the sense of threat." Do NOT put the onus of doing this emotional labor on your marginalized employees. Hire experts, if possible. Challenge the person pushing back to put themselves in the shoes of those who are marginalized.
- **Invite/call in to engage with DEI efforts.** "Pushback arguments can also be traced back to a lack of clarity on employees' role in DEI. HR leaders can involve employees by holding individuals accountable for DEI engagement." We must create a safe space for those who have not bought in to learn how to create a safe space for those who are marginalized.
- **The customer is not always right.** It's okay to walk away from harmful situations/people. By letting people who aren't in alignment leave, you're making room for those who are.

Sources:

- www.gartner.com/en/articles/how-to-navigate-pushback-to-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-efforts
- hbr.org/2023/03/to-overcome-resistance-to-dei-understand-whats-driving-it

15 SIMPLE ACTIONS TO BE A MORE INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LEADER

Understand and Learn (Leadership)

- Study resources to gain a better understanding of DEI and inclusive language.** Watch the video, "[Making More Inclusive Decisions](#)" class by Hildy Gottlieb, or watch the TED talk, "[Making Communities More Inclusive Now](#)" by Naaima Kahn.
- Begin to understand the challenges faced by different identity groups.** Read "[Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access 101](#)" from the University of Colorado Denver.
- Learn how you can be a more inclusive leader.** Read "[To Build an Inclusive Culture, Start with Inclusive Meetings](#)" by Kathryn Heath and Brenda F. Wensil.

Measure (Organization)

- Assess the composition of project teams, the board of directors, and those in leadership roles** to include diverse ages, genders, races, ethnicities and personalities to make sure the full diversity of perspectives and backgrounds are being represented in decision making.
- Understand your organization's place on the DEI continuum.** The [Meyer Memorial Trust Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Spectrum Tool](#) is used to assess where an organization is on its DEI journey and to identify potential areas for future work. The tool describes organizational characteristics at different points along the DEI continuum for twelve different dimensions of inclusion work.
- Create SMARTie Goals.** SMARTIE stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable. By incorporating an equity and inclusion component to your SMART goals, you can make sure your organization's commitment to equity and inclusion is anchored by tangible and actionable steps.



Empower (Internal)

- Take the time to discuss with your colleagues how to further build a space where everyone feels welcome, safe and respected at work.**
 - Facilitate or encourage the creation of "safe spaces" such as gay-straight alliances, or a themed queer night or ski-day, prayer rooms, or quiet spaces.** The creation of safe environments where people can pray, gather, socialize, and connect without worrying about blatant hate or even microaggressions promotes diversity.
 - Create an anonymous feedback system** that allows employees to recognize things that co-workers are doing well or ask questions about things they don't understand – this can contribute to a positive work environment and improve customer service.
 - In meetings, encourage individuals to lead and speak that may not otherwise get the chance,** especially when the subject matter impacts them or their work/livelihood directly. Give everyone a chance to speak during meetings.
 - Offer employee incentive programs for employees to become engaged in community boards, commissions, and organizations.**
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Amplify (External)

- Participate in Open To All,** a national nondiscrimination campaign based around the idea that everyone should be welcome regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, immigration status, religion or disability.
- Volunteer for a local organization** that serves a cause that you care about. If you are a business or government entity, organize paid work volunteer days and invite local nonprofits to present to your employees about the work they are doing. Getting engaged with local causes provides an opportunity to both help, as well as learn.



- Seek out opportunities for diverse social engagement** such as fundraisers, classes, or community events.
- Acknowledge a diverse set of holidays and celebrations in your social media content.** The Arvada Chamber's Inclusion + Belonging KAPS Council created a 2024 Holidays and Observances calendar that includes month-long observances, multi-faith holidays, and other notable days throughout the year to celebrate with your employees and the community. Download this resource at www.arvadachamber.org/2024-holidays-and-observances.

RESOURCES

This guide was created by the Arvada Chamber Inclusion and Belonging KAPS Council.

KAPS stands for Kick-Ass Problem Solvers and the business and community leaders on this council work diligently to ensure that the Arvada business community is leading the way in taking meaningful action to improve I&B best practices. Learn more at arvadachamber.org/inclusion.

Citations and other additional resources:

- **What Works Toolkit** - <https://whatworkstoolkit.50-30tools.ca>
- **An action plan for change - Halifax Chamber of Commerce**
halifaxchamber.com/business-voice/an-action-plan-for-change
- **DSM Partnership Diversity & Inclusion Strategy Resources & Best Practices**
<https://www.dsmpartnership.com/growing-business-here/business-resources/diversity-inclusion-resources/diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-toolkit>
- **Harvard Business Review - Diversity and Inclusion Efforts That Really Work**
<https://hbr.org/2020/05/diversity-and-inclusion-efforts-that-really-work>
- **Workable - How to foster workplace diversity** <https://resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/workplace-diversity>
- **Women in the Workplace 2023 report | McKinsey** <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>
- **COQUAL- Being Black in Corporate America** <https://coqual.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CoqualBeingBlackinCorporateAmerica090720-1.pdf>
- **Beyond Diversity: An LGBT Best Practice Guide for Employers**
<https://prideatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Beyond-Diversity-LGBT-Guide.pdf>
- **Diverse Green - A Roadmap to Building an Inclusive Organization**
https://diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/BeyondDiversity_Report_060517-1.pdf
- **Quad Cities Chamber DEI Toolkit**
https://www.railslibraries.info/sites/default/files/Quad%20Cities%20Chamber%20DEI_Toolkit_FINAL.pdf
- **The Billings Chamber DEI Toolkit** <https://www.billingsdei.com/wp-content/uploads/BCC-DEI-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>

arvadachamber.org/inclusion

