# Diversity Made Simple

**Government Version**

# Support Materials

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# Video Transcript

**Diversity Made Simple**

Embracing the talents of people from all cultures, races, ethnicities, faiths, beliefs and personal experiences is imperative for government organizations that wish to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

With demographics becoming more racially and ethnically diverse every year, a recent surge in legal protections for more groups of employees, the trend of an increasingly later retirement age and a rising number of women in the workplace, our labor force has never been more diverse or primed for success.

Organizations that have seen the critical need to attract and retain diverse talent and have made diversity and inclusion part of their core values have proven to be far more successful than those that have not.

Focusing on workplace diversity has become so important that all employees have an obligation to educate themselves on what diversity is, why it's so important and the steps they need to take to embrace it and participate in it.

**What is Diversity?**

When most people think of diversity, they think of the groups protected from harassment and discrimination by federal or local law: race, color, age, sex, pregnancy or family status, disability, religion, national origin, genetic information, military status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

While these court mandated protections have created a much fairer and more equitable workplace, a truly effective diversity policy protects and embraces all of the diverse characteristics employees possess regardless of an obligation to do so.

Some less thought of but no less important examples include: citizenship status, income, net worth, credit history, criminal history, education, address, upbringing, life experience, physical appearance, physical abilities, critical thinking ability, language fluency, communication skills, work style, hobbies, clubs and affiliations, work experience and political affiliation.

To put it simply, workplace diversity is all of the diverse traits, beliefs, talents, knowledge, styles and experience employees bring to the workplace and an effective diversity policy goes far beyond any legal protections by seeking, accepting and including all of these differences.

**Why is Diversity Important?**

The ethical standards of modern society demand the fair and equal treatment of everyone in the workplace. Organizations that fail to embrace diversity and inclusion run the risk of negative reports becoming disclosed through press coverage, social media and word-of-mouth.   This unwanted attention

can lead to a tarnished reputation negatively affecting relationships with citizens, employees and the ability to attract talent from the labor force.

Furthermore, organizations that don't value diversity run the risk of violating federal, state and local equal opportunity laws which could result in both government fines and serious civil and criminal penalties.

Lastly, valuing diversity and inclusion takes advantage of the talents, experiences and knowledge of every employee and results in both an increase in employee morale and the ability to recruit, retain and hire a talented and diverse staff.  Consequently, diverse organizations become more productive, innovative and creative allowing them to provide better service to their citizens.

**Discovering Understanding Personal Biases**

Understanding why people have developed stereotypes and biases is the essential first step to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Every human being has biases that form from a lifetime of interactions and experiences. Media, television shows, movies, family, friends and personal experiences all play a role in this development.

While having biases and stereotypes is natural, allowing them to negatively affect interactions with people at work is unacceptable.

It's critical that all employees take the time to uncover personal biases and understand why they have developed.  Most employees want to believe their actions are untainted by bias, so this reflection can be uncomfortable.  However, this information is needed to combat deeply ingrained preconceptions and to leave biases at the door when arriving at work.

Battling personal biases that have been formed over a lifetime is never easy so it's important to utilize the three most important actions needed to combat them: respect, inclusion and finding common ground.

**Respect**

All interactions at work must start with respect.  This includes all relations with co-workers, customers, vendors and any other person that employees come in contact with on the job.

Without a foundation of respect, diversity and inclusion are impossible.  Therefore, every communication whether it be verbal, non-verbal, electronic or in-person should focus on respect.

Much of respect is simple, yet its effect is powerful.  Saying "please" and "thank you", listening to others without interruption and arriving on time for meetings are all essential.

When communicating verbally never use sarcastic, patronizing, angry or annoyed tones of voice.  In addition, unnecessary criticism, put-downs and insults are never acceptable.

Disrespectful communication can also be non-verbal.  Non-verbal communication is often subconscious and it takes diligent and consistent effort to pinpoint and eliminate behavior that conveys disrespect.

During face-to-face communication be sure to maintain eye contact, avoid looking at a watch or phone and eliminate disrespectful gestures and eye-rolling.

Electronic communication should be written clearly and politely.  Without the benefit of facial expression and voice inflection, messages can be easily misconstrued. Additionally, texts and emails should be returned promptly.  If an immediate response is not possible, politely acknowledge receipt and explain why there will be a delay.

Treating everyone with respect regardless of personal characteristics, beliefs or affiliations is essential to creating a diverse and open workplace.  When every employee, from a brand new entry level worker to the CEO, receives the same high level of respect, it helps ensure that all of an organization's valuable talent and resources are utilized.

**Inclusion**

Inclusion is the appreciation and active involvement of every diverse employee's unique talent, knowledge and experience.  Inclusive organizations recognize the great value of diverse perspectives and welcome employees with different backgrounds, beliefs and characteristics.

Every employee has a role in developing an inclusive workplace and should:

- Sincerely listen to and consider contributions from every member in work teams, groups or committees.

- Avoid situations that may exclude a team member, like making a team decision or working on a team project at a social event when one member of the team has not been invited.

- Never allow biases and stereotypes to waste valuable talent, knowledge and experience. For instance, aged based biases might waste the valuable insight younger employees have on how to better serve generation Y citizens or squander the technological expertise and talent of older employees.

- Refrain from making comments that highlight stereotypes such as "It's rare to meet a female programmer." or "It's not often that you see an Asian publicist."  Remarks like these make people feel that their talent and potential is limited and that their contributions are less valued.

- And seek out input, ideas and advice from co-workers who might provide valuable insight from a different perspective.

**Common Ground**

All employees have diverse characteristics which make them unique, however there are common human values, aspirations and beliefs that are shared among man or woman, young or old and in nearly every culture, ethnicity and nationality around the world.

Finding common ground starts with education. For instance, taking time to research the unfamiliar faith or culture of a co-worker may provide valuable insight and understanding that leads to a more productive relationship.

In the process, employees will undoubtedly find commonalities with their own cultures or faiths allowing them to relate to their co-workers personally.  After all, virtually every culture on the planet shares the same basic values, such as family, justice and love.

Additionally, all employees should make a sincere effort to discover their co-workers' ideas, needs and goals.  In the process, they may just find that they align with their own, leading to greater respect and inclusion.

Common ground is also found through open, honest and respectful communication.

Employees who feel disrespected should politely but openly communicate their feelings to the offending party.  More often than not the disrespectful behavior is made out of ignorance, not malice; and honest, respectful communication almost always leads to understanding.

Conversely, staying silent or responding with anger, resentment or suspicion usually leads to an unproductive and stressful relationship that wastes an organization's time, talent and resources.

**In conclusion**

While creating a diverse and inclusive workplace may not always be easy, the benefits are so significant that it has become a requirement in today's increasingly diverse world.

Organizations that value diversity have great productivity and efficiency, creativity and innovation, higher employee morale, and lower employee turnover.

By accepting that we all have stereotypes and biases and by working toward mitigating those stereotypes through respect, inclusion and finding common ground, every employee and organization will be more successful.

# Questions for Discussion:

1.  Name 25 different characteristics that people in the workplace might possess.

2.  Name 3 or more different ways that diversity and inclusion could make your organization more successful.

3.  Name 5 behaviors that are considered disrespectful by just about everyone in the workplace.

4.  Name 3 behaviors that you could use personally on a daily basis to show respect and develop a stronger relationship with your co-workers?

5.  Name 3 ways that you could personally promote inclusion in your workplace?

6.  Why is "meeting on common ground" such an important part of developing respect and promoting inclusion?

7.  Why is it critical that all employees take the time to uncover personal biases and understand why they have developed.

# Sample Diversity Policy

Diversity and inclusion are at the center of our core values at [Organization Name] and we are committed to seeking, accepting and including all of the unique talents, knowledge and experience that our employees bring to the workplace.

The people that make up [organization name] are its most valuable asset. We take pride in every colorful difference that our employees possess and we recognize that our future depends on the ingenuity, innovation, productivity, efficiency, reputation and pride that our diversity engenders.

The differences we seek, encourage and embrace include, but are not limited to: race, color, age, sex, pregnancy, family or marriage status, disability, religion, national origin, genetic information, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic background, net worth, education, address, upbringing, life experience, physical appearance, physical abilities, language, mental ability, political affiliation and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

At [organization name] diversity and inclusion is at the core of our management policies and practices on recruiting, interviewing, hiring, promotions, training, development, compensation, scheduling, delegation and every other important management decision, policy, plan or procedure. Therefore, we have several expectations for our employees.

- Treat co-workers, vendors, citizens and any other person encountered while representing the organization with dignity and respect.

- Sincerely listen to and consider contributions from every member in work teams, groups or committees.

- Avoid situations that may exclude a team member and find ways to include input, ideas and advice from co-workers.

- Never allow biases and stereotypes to affect work decisions.

- Attend regularly scheduled diversity and inclusion training.

- Make accommodations when necessary for religion, physical or mental disabilities, family status or any other reasonable need.

- Never engage in harassment, discrimination, bullying or any other inappropriate or illegal conduct.

[Organization Name] encourages employees who believe they are being harassed, discriminated against, bullied, treated unfairly, excluded or disrespected to report the conduct to human resources or a member of the management staff.

Employees who violate our harassment, discrimination or diversity and inclusion policies are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

I understand and accept [Organization Name] diversity and inclusion policy.

Print Name

Signature                                          Date

# Employee Quiz

1. (T / F) Organizations with a successful diversity policies *limit* diversity and inclusion programs to the core groups of people defined legally by EEO law - race, color, age, sex, pregnancy or family status, disability, religion, national origin, genetic information, military status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

2. (T / F) Diversity is imperative in government because diverse organizations become more productive, innovative and creative when they embrace diversity...allowing them to provide better service to their citizens.

3. (T / F) Every human being has biases that form from a lifetime of interactions and experiences. Media, television shows, movies, family, friends and personal experiences all play a role in this development.

4. (T / F) Because most non-verbal communication is subconscious; it is not an important part of showing respect to co-workers.

5. (T / F) Inclusive organizations recognize the great value of diverse perspectives and welcome employees with different backgrounds, beliefs and characteristics, however most successful organizations avoid the perspectives of young employees because they are too new to the workplace to add real value to organizational decisions.

6. (T / F) Avoid situations that may exclude a team member, like making a team decision or working on a team project at a social event when one member of the team has not been invited.

7. (T / F) Employees who feel disrespected should politely but openly communicate their feelings to the offending party. More often than not the disrespectful behavior is made out of ignorance, not malice; and honest, respectful communication almost always leads to understanding.

8. (T / F) Finding common ground between employees of different faiths, nationalities and ethnicities is generally unattainable due to the vast differences between cultures.

9. (T / F) Comments such as "It's rare to meet a female programmer." or "It's not often that you see an Asian publicist" are great compliments because they highlight stereotypes and make the person feel like they have a special gift.

10. (T / F) One of the best way to promote inclusion is to consult with co-workers who might provide a different perspective when working on an assignment or project.

# Employee Quiz Answer Guide

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