Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

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Introduction to the Toolkit

As the voice of the home building industry, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) strives to provide a welcoming environment where every person can thrive. The breadth of expertise and capabilities among the professionals who support home building can only be at its best when we all value the creativity and innovation that can be achieved by including all voices.

Moreover, effective Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) practices just make good business sense. In an increasingly competitive marketplace for talent, every employer needs to enhance its workplace on a continuous basis to attract and retain the best talent. Today's employees want inclusive work environments where they feel welcomed and valued. This leads to employee engagement which is the fundamental building block of employee productivity and strong business financial performance. Recent studies have consistently confirmed that regardless of the business sector, diverse companies out-perform non-diverse firms on a number of factors particularly including profitability. (McKinsey & Company, Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters (2020))

In 2020, NAHB formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force made up of leaders from across the Federation. The task force was created to identify best practices for developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive membership that is representative of all who seek the American Dream of homeownership.

Defining DEI

A comprehensive glossary is included as a resource at the end of this document, but it is important to establish here the meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion. This definition will guide efforts to implement best practices in the workplace and help to avoid misconceptions about the purpose of this DEI initiative.

- **Diversity:** All the ways in which people differ. Encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another - including, but not limited to gender identity, nationality, socioeconomic status, education, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, language, learning styles, (dis)ability, age, or political perspective.
- **Equity:** Fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people.
- **Inclusion:** The act of creating environments and structures via procedure and policy in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and encouraged to fully participate.

Put simply, DEI is an overall approach to ensuring that everyone is included and treated fairly (Kapila, Hines, & Searby).

Vision Statement

We envision a membership that accurately reflects the wide diversity of the people who work in the home building industry and participate in associations and organizations and encourages them to utilize their influence to make the homes and communities we build, improve and maintain more accessible to all.

Mission Statement

The NAHB DEI Task Force seeks to improve and enhance an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the NAHB Federation through the development and dissemination of educational tools that creatively engage members to action.

DEI Compact

In 2021, the Task Force introduced the [NAHB DEI Compact](#), a simple document that expresses association values as they relate to DEI initiatives. The NAHB DEI Compact is based on five guiding principles designed to foster and cultivate an association culture that promotes and encourages diversity, equity, and inclusion as a foundation of a strong NAHB federation.

Each of the hundreds of signatories expressed their commitment to embracing DEI principles throughout the federation by supporting the following actions:

1. **Welcoming Frank and Honest Discussion** — We acknowledge that the first step of improving diversity, equity and inclusion begins with appropriate discussion.
2. **Having a Listening Heart** — We understand listening with your heart to experiences and context will develop empathy and knowledge.
3. **Committing to Engagement** — We commit to a higher level of individual engagement that stretches capacities and individual experiences.
4. **Taking Action** — We understand that words do not create progress and that only specific and determined action, on everyone's part, will create the necessary changes.
5. **Creating a Movement, Not a Moment** — We unite our strength to achieve a common goal of creating a new level of diversity, equity and inclusion that changes the human experience now and in the future.

Making a commitment to diversity and inclusion is only the first step in a long, but rewarding, DEI journey. Research shows that when businesses, government, and organizations embrace diversity they improve their functionality and productivity. This includes hiring and actively engaging individuals from a variety of backgrounds with a wealth of perspectives and skills (Dizikes, 2014).

Taking action on equity and inclusion within our association, businesses, and communities is an important and necessary means of ensuring relevance in changing times. However, changing the culture of the organization and community is not something one can do alone. It takes the combined efforts of all leadership, in collaboration with members, staff and community leaders to truly galvanize this kind of change.

We also want to recognize that the work of DEI is dynamic and difficult. It takes courage, determination and compassion. The DEI journey this document endorses will likely include awkward moments, tough decisions and occasional mistakes. Our purpose is to shed light on the need for these actions and to to provide a resource to help with your journey. There is no single best approach for every employer and association. The following are tools to add to your toolbox to help implement the DEI initiatives that are needed and work best in your environment. The process may be slow, but if we do the work and act together, it will have a significant and lasting impact.

The Power of Collaboration

Local, state and national home builders' and remodelers' associations function as communities within which home building professionals cooperate and collaborate to improve housing opportunity for all. To ensure the strength of the industry, it is imperative that leaders invite and explore a diversity of perspectives (internal and external) by including diverse stakeholders in business and association decisions.

Explanation of Issue

In order to develop marketing materials, community programs, non-profit or business policies and best practices, it is key to understand the group that you are representing or providing services for. Create a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure all perspectives are invited and considered (DiversityQ, 2019).

Practical Tools

- Assess the composition of project teams, the board of directors, and those in leadership roles to include diverse ages, genders, gender identities, sexualities, races, ethnicities and personalities to make sure the full diversity of perspectives and backgrounds are being represented in decision making.
- Give your team the tools to label their strengths, weaknesses, and communication styles. Encourage employees to share their style preferences with each other and provide opportunities to work alongside different personality types.
- Whenever necessary and feasible, DEI experts should be hired to support your efforts to adhere to best practices.
- Regularly discuss DEI related topics during member meetings.

Seeking to Understand

The first step in implementing DEI principles is understanding how your upbringing, life experiences, personal biases and opinions shape your approach to being more inclusive. Be thoughtful about how diversity might be under-represented in your association/workplace/social circle/community and assess your own privilege and bias.

Explanation of Issue

Understand your own unconscious biases (prejudice or judgement) and the impact of possible privileges so as to more thoughtfully approach DEI issues in your association and be more inclusive in your practices. This increased self- awareness will help to identify where you may be making decisions based on unconscious biases rather than facts and actual circumstances.

Practical Tools
- Consider obtaining training for managers and rank and file employees that addresses unconscious bias in workplace decision-making.
- Assess your own privilege using this tool: Intersectionality Score Calculator
- Read this article explaining racial privilege: What Is White Privilege, Really? (Collins, 2018)
- Work to better understand implicit/unconscious bias
    - Learn more about your implicit biases with the Implicit Association Test

- Develop practices to mitigate implicit bias when making staffing/recruiting decisions for your association
- For example, create objective methods to evaluate candidates and blind systems in place to mitigate bias (remove names and gender identifiers from applications)
- The Meyer Memorial Trust 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.
- Examine existing association DEI policies; If they don't exist, work to create them (this document can be used as a starting point) and regularly evaluate performance.

Learning to Use Inclusive Language

Language is a powerful and constantly evolving tool for communication. Staying up to date on what is considered inclusive and supportive can seem like a daunting challenge, but putting in the effort to grow and change is in the best interest of our association. In conversations with association staff, leadership or current/prospective members, it is important to use language that makes all feel welcome. This will help broaden membership recruitment efforts, strengthening the association from the inside-out. Take the time to learn about inclusive language, why it's important, and how to use it.

Explanation of Issue

Inclusive language is inherently non-exclusive and is sensitive to people of diverse backgrounds. Taking the time to learn and understand current and evolving preferred concepts and terms can be a simple but impactful way to be inclusive. Using inclusive language is a powerful way of communicating mindfulness.

Practical Tools

- Familiarize yourself/staff/colleagues/members with appropriate terminology and take time to understand why other terms are hurtful or hateful.
- Familiarize yourself with our glossary of current inclusive terms referenced in our Helpful Resources Guide at the end of this document.
- Pay attention to the language you use:
    - Use open, inclusive language.
    - Ask and share preferred pronouns.
    - Avoid stereotypes, making assumptions or passing judgement, and inherently discriminatory language.
    - Refer to the person first, e.g. woman who is deaf vs. Deaf woman, people with disabilities vs. disabled people.
    - Use gender neutral and welcoming signage in the office and at association meetings.
    - Use inclusive language and images in social media and marketing materials.
- If you are struggling with using language pertaining to certain pronouns, racial identities, sexual orientation or level of ability, start by conducting your own research; There are abundant online resources. Then, ask within your networks if they have experience or good resources about inclusive language. If you want more information still, or context from a person who uses this self-identification, ask their consent before expecting them to share their experience and insight with you.
- Understand that this is an ongoing effort; Language changes regularly, so continue to pay attention to emerging trends in inclusive language.
    - Watch the video "Great Presentations Use Inclusive Language" by Tyrone Holmes. Key takeaways from the lesson include:
        - Avoid analogies because they assume the same cultural frame of reference.
        - Avoid slang or jargon because it can be misunderstood or offensive.
        - Use stories, examples and shared experiences to facilitate self-disclosure.

Reflecting the Audience

The way we promote our work and our associations can have a huge impact on the public reception and perception of our organizations. Using imagery and language in marketing and promotional materials that reflects and considers people of different gender identities, nationalities, socioeconomic status, education, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, language, learning styles, (dis)abilities, ages, or political perspectives can expand our audiences and our businesses.

Explanation of Issue

If the way that we promote our associations and businesses doesn't actively reflect diversity, equity and inclusion concepts, we will seem unwelcoming to people of diverse backgrounds and will inadvertently be exclusive. Imagery used in the promotion of our associations, events, products and businesses is an extremely powerful means of demonstrating inclusion and growing our intended audience.

Practical Tools

- Assess your existing marketing tools and consider if they are inclusive.
- Participate in OpenToAll.
- Reference stock footage sites that use diverse imagery:
  - Diversity Footage
  - Diversity Images
- Research and implement effective strategies and promotions. Some good examples include:
  - Save the Children: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy
  - University of Michigan: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Promotion
  - How to Integrate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into Everyday Operations
  - 7 Steps to Embed Equity and Inclusion

Expanding Your Repertoire,
Expanding Your Network

With such a diverse membership, and the potential for even more growth, it is important to take the time to seek out opportunities to engage with people outside of your typical social/professional circles.

Explanation of Issue

A key step toward acceptance and inclusion is relating to and engaging with people who are different from ourselves. If we remain within our existing social/professional networks, it is difficult to develop an appreciation for diverse groups of people. Branching out socially and professionally is a key step toward growth and expanded understanding and awareness.

Practical Tools

- Partner with other local associations/organizations/businesses to bring in DEI experts who can offer relevant training.
- Volunteer for a local organization that serves a cause that you care about. Some great options include partnering with a local high school shop class, working with your local Boys and. Girls Club, or engaging in existing Home Builders Institute workforce development programs or starting your own.
- Seek out opportunities for diverse social engagement such as membership drives, association or BUILD-PAC fundraisers, master classes, or community events like a Parade of Homes.
- Read books by authors from different backgrounds than your own. Stories provide a great means for better understanding and relating to people with different experiences, views or backgrounds.

Empowering Those Around You

Embracing DEI issues is something that must take place on an individual and organizational level. This means we must all do the work on our own and in our social circles, with our peers and others around us. Support members/employees/colleagues/friends of different backgrounds in their efforts to be more engaged in decision making and encourage friends and colleagues in decision-making roles to do the same.

Explanation of Issue

Diverse, inclusive, and equitable engagement, especially in decision-making processes within our associations, communities, government, and businesses brings different perspectives to the table, builds strong, sustainable relationships, and helps capture a complete range of values and perspectives. Empowering people from diverse backgrounds to engage in decision making and to "lean in" allows for improved and more equitable systems.

Practical Tools

- Support employees, fellow members, colleagues/associates and other building industry professionals of different backgrounds in their efforts to be more engaged in decision making and leadership roles by coordinating training opportunities, providing flexible schedules, mentoring, and offering your support. Encourage friends and colleagues in decision-making roles to do the same.
- Assess impact of new structures/policies.
- Encourage employees to identify preferred professional development opportunities.
  - o Consider developing a continuing education budget to allow employees to engage in ongoing training.
  - o Create and share a schedule/calendar of events listing opportunities for professional development and engagement.
  - o Create mentorship opportunities to help professionals learn about their field and roles from senior practitioners.
    - ■ NAHB Leadership Connect resource is a great place to start.
  - o Succession planning
- Be thoughtful and deliberate when recruiting board members to ensure diversity:
  - o See the California Endowment DEI Audit for an example of how to set goals and track progress.

- When necessary and possible, create a taskforce composed of a diversity of perspectives and voices who can evaluate policies/practices/plans according to different perspectives and priorities to weigh in on association decisions.

Planning to Include Everyone by Including Everyone in Planning

Strengthening the culture of any association hinges upon creating environments that make all feel welcome. Venue, activity and meeting content are considerable items to keep in mind during the planning process. To make meetings, events and outings that make everyone feel welcomed and included, be mindful and considerate of different life stages and cultures, e.g. consider childcare needs of attendees or activities that are inclusive for those who don't drink alcohol, etc.

Explanation of Issue

Design community/association events, meetings and fundraisers to be inclusive and welcoming to diverse audiences to encourage community-wide engagement and socialization.

Practical Tools

- Implement a bottom-up approach toward generating and implementing business ideas.
- Offer meetings and community events at easy-to-access locations and at a variety of times to allow for maximal participation. Be thoughtful about when alcohol is served and design family friendly events/meetings.
- Offer a suggestion box that invites input about discussion times and provides an opportunity for open communication about frustrations or concerns.
- Utilize the Mark Friedman's Results-Based Accountability framework, a rigorous method to ensure DEI policies and practices are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.
- Read "To Build an Inclusive Culture, Start with Inclusive Meetings" by Kathryn Heath and Brenda F. Wensil

Fostering Respect

Nurturing DEI principles in the association or in the workplace requires diligent effort to ensure all feel welcome. Respect and create "safe spaces" for people of color, LGBTQIA, (dis)abilities and neurodiversity to be with others who share their identity and unique challenges.

Explanation of Issue

Openly inclusive schools, businesses, and social clubs foster increased security and morale of employees, students, customers, and members and contribute to a productive and vibrant culture. A key part of creating a safe space is to eliminate microaggressions or blatant expressions of hate.

Practical Tools

- Facilitate or encourage the creation of "safe spaces" such as gay-straight alliances, prayer rooms, or quiet spaces. The creation of safe environments where people can pray, gather, socialize, and connect without worrying about microaggressions or hate promotes diversity.

- Create internal policy and procedure to ensure that microaggressions, bias, or hate have actionable consequences.
- If you see something, say something. Microaggressions and bias exist everywhere. Learn how to navigate these situations by having intentional conversations:
    - Try talking with friends, trusted coworkers, maybe even your HR department (if applicable). You may not be able to mediate an inequitable situation or stop toxic culture right away, but you can learn more about systemic inequities and build your confidence to change and improve these environments.

Amplifying New Voices

The work of diversity, equity, and inclusion is fruitless when individuals who are part of the dominant culture refuse to cede power and space to marginalized people. Step aside so others can step forward.

Explanation of Issue

If the dominant culture within an organization/business/community gatekeeps the vast majority of power and space, whether intentionally or otherwise, it creates a dynamic of exclusion that can be all but impossible for marginalized voices to overcome. It is vitally important to make sure that everyone within a culture or organization is enabled to voice their opinion and share their stories, particularly those who have not yet had their chance to participate.

Practical Tools

- Make sure your efforts to make your workplace or association more diverse, equitable, and inclusive are based on best practices as established by DEI professionals. These best practices are typically established by communities most impacted by inequity and exclusion.
    - Read "7 Examples of What Being an Ally at Work Really Looks Like" by Better Allies.
    - Read "Educate, Empower, Advocate: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in a Digital Society" by W. Ian O'Byrne.
- When someone entrusts you with their experience, listen. Follow their lead on next steps; understand it may not be what you would do in their situation. Honor their trust by asking how you can help them and follow through on that support but be honest about your capabilities. Understand that they may not want your input or support.
- 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 directly. Give everyone a chance to speak during meetings.
- Provide credit where credit is due. When implementing ideas, concepts, and projects that are not your own or that extensively use another's work, credit the author authentically, and integrate this credit into permanent materials.

Recommended Next Steps

This toolkit is not intended to be the end of your association's DEI efforts, but rather the launching point. Increasing DEI awareness requires ongoing effort, engagement, and evaluation. Therefore, we have listed a number of recommended actions that we encourage association leaders and employers to continue this ongoing process of implementing DEI principles throughout the Federation:

- Targeted DEI training for Managers and other leaders
- Lunch and Learn events to learn about different cultures or communities represented in the workplace and throughout the Association
- Creation of newsletters or spotlights that highlight the contributions of diverse members of the workforce
- Supporting/participating in community volunteer activities that support diverse communities/groups etc.

Helpful resources to guide your journey

In addition to the resources provided throughout this document, the following links can be used to educate yourself on all things DEI, from uncovering your own personal privilege and bias and to further educating yourself in a variety of DEI-related topics:

- Glossary of DEI terms and phrases.
- Take a Privilege Points questionnaire. This exercise will help you reflect on ways that race affords privilege to some and not to others. Tri-County Domestic & Sexual Violence Intervention Network Anti-Oppression Training for Trainers.
- Take an implicit association test. This helps identify your own biases and stereotypes.
- LinkedIn Learning offers many courses specific to Diversity and Inclusion.
- Watch "How to Outsmart Your Own Unconscious Bias" (TEDxPasadena) by author and CEO Valerie Alexander.
- Watch the TEDtalk, "Making Communities More Inclusive Now" by Naaima Kahn
- Read articles related to inclusive language to better understand the words we should and should not use.
- Access Google's guide to inclusive marketing.

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Note: Much of the content of this toolkit was drawn from The Do-It-Yourself Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DIY DEI) Toolkit for Routt County, Colorado, 2020.