

# Planning for Inclusive Excellence

A Community Resource for  
Strategic Diversity, Equity, &  
Inclusion

# We Acknowledge

We acknowledge that the land we live, learn, and work on in the greater Charlottesville area is the traditional territory of the Monacan Indian Nation. We pay respect to their elders – past, present, and emerging. We also pay respect to the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock, the Nansemond and the additional sovereign Indigenous nations who have an enduring relationship with and call our surrounding area home today.

Learn more about “Whose Land” you are on and the importance of an authentic land acknowledgement practice, in relationship with Indigenous nations, at <https://www.whose.land/en/> and <https://usdac.us/nativeland>.

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# Introduction

If you are not sure where to start in creating a strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion plan for your organization or business, this is a guide to kickstart your thinking. This guide specifically engages the "Inclusive Excellence" framework to not only deeply examine the innovative and inclusive potential of your organization, but to also join your efforts with a shared community of practice across our area to have an even greater collective impact.

There is no one "right" or "best" way to create a strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion or "Inclusive Excellence/IE" plan. This toolkit is simply that, a tool to help you get started should you need it. The IE framework is flexible not prescriptive, and the IE planning process should work in support of core and ongoing activities of your organization or business.

At its core "inclusive excellence" is the idea and recognition that a community or organization's success is dependent on how well it values, engages, and includes the rich diversity of individuals, knowledges, experiences, and voices in the population it serves.

Self-assessment is critical to any planning process and is the focus of planning in the IE framework. You may want to start your process by [assessing where your organization is overall on the spectrum of inclusion](#). The IE framework can then help to re-center and enhance prior analysis and future work with an equity-minded lens to ensure that the excellence derived from inclusive and equitable design and practice, is consistently and sustainably realized. The dimensions of the IE framework are:

- Access + Success
- Climate + Intergroup Relations
- Education + Training
- Infrastructure + Investments
- Community + Partnership

Based on your self-assessment, your organization could identify areas of affirmation and opportunity in all, some, or maybe only one of the dimensions. The key is that whatever is made a priority for the organization will be reflective of a clear purpose, be intentional, and represent a meaningful opportunity to make a real, sustainable, and positive change in terms of equity and inclusion in and for your organization.

## Key Principles

Each organization and their leadership will have a preference and decide the level of the organization at which strategic plans using the IE framework are designed. Some may choose the entire organization, while others will use a "department" or a unique collection of areas joined by function. At whatever level it is organized, a strategic plan utilizing the IE framework at its best will be:

- **Mission-driven** – Reflective of the mission and scope of the organization or business and tied to best practices that fully leverage difference to fuel excellence.
- **Equity-focused** - Understanding that the organization has the agency and the responsibility of positively working toward equitable outcomes.
- **High-impact** – Tailored to those key priorities and actions that will drive equitable and meaningful change. The IE plan should not include all potential or ongoing work but should be reflective of key strategies and measures that have transformative potential.
- **Transparent** – IE plans should describe the assessment and analysis that identified the key priorities and actions and be shared publicly.
- **Measurable** – Evidence should drive not only the establishment of the IE plan but also the process for holding the organization accountable for enacting the plan and provide the basis for understanding if the intended goals are being achieved.
- **Co-created** – Meaningfully reflecting the input of multiple constituencies and groups within the organization/business and those served or impacted.

# Inclusive Excellence Planning Process

Inquiry. Action. Accountability.

## Steps in the Process

## Key Planning Tools

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create an IE team for collaborative design</li><li>2. Engage in self-study and review any prior/current strategic plans</li><li>3. Determine priority commitments</li><li>4. Develop a co-created IE action and accountability plan</li><li>5. Circulate a “final draft” plan for review for constituent feedback</li><li>6. Review feedback and finalize plan</li></ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Building the IE team</li><li>▪ E&amp;I Data exploration guides</li><li>▪ Engagement ideas</li><li>▪ Goal development guide</li><li>▪ IE plan summary template</li><li>▪ Additional resources</li></ul> |
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# Inclusive Excellence Definitions

## Diversity

The full spectrum of human attributes, perspectives, identities, backgrounds, and disciplines.

Fair treatment, equal access, and attending to socio-historical structures and lived context to promote justice.

## Equity

## Inclusion

An active, intentional, ongoing process to build community well-being and belonging.

Taking notice of inequities, their contexts, and the organization's agency and responsibility in critically reassessing its own practices.

## Equity-Minded

## Anchor Mission

A commitment to intentionally apply an organization's place-based economic power and human capital in partnership with community.

# IE Framework Dimensions

The IE framework is designed as a comprehensive but flexible structure for engaged, intentional, and systemic self-study across all areas of organizational functioning as described below.



Access  
+  
Success

This dimension refers to the compositional diversity among the organization's constituent groups (staff, visitors, attendees, customers, community partners, etc.) and their context-specific outcomes or benefits gained from their relationships with the organization. Processes like recruitment, retention, development, and long-term outcomes for those served are the key focus of this dimension.



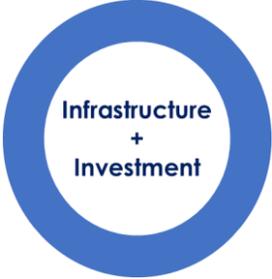
Climate  
+  
Intergroup  
Relations

This dimension refers to what it feels like for individuals to be connected to the organization, and the behavioral experiences and norms that are present. Effective and innovative cultures depend on individuals feeling comfortable to take interpersonal risks and to bring their whole selves to their engagement with your organization. Measuring constituent perceptions related to feeling respected, belonging, and prevalence of affirming relationships with peers and organizational representatives are among the concepts present in this dimension.



Education  
+  
Training

This dimension relates to the ways in which education and training for those in the organization (and learning/modeling engagement with the public) contribute to community engagement, service, inclusion, equity, and social justice. Programs and processes in this dimension include intentionally designed learning programs as well as targeted professional development activities that promote intercultural awareness and competence relevant to the mission of the organization.



Infrastructure  
+  
Investment

This dimension refers to the policies, resources, organizational and communication structures, and performance measures that inform and enable an intentionally inclusive, equitable, and innovative organization.



Community  
+  
Partnership

This dimension refers to how place-based organizations engage reciprocally and in a participatory way with our surrounding neighborhoods, counties, and state. Specifically, how the organization understands and tracks their impacts in terms of the financial and social-well being of the communities and partners with which they are engaged.

# IE Planning Team Guide

## Building the IE Planning Team

The first step in the strategic planning process that should be considered is assembling a team of individuals who will lead the effort. For many, participation in the planning process will likely be fluid, with participants coming in and out of the process as needed. It is however recommended that a core IE planning team that is representative and includes individuals with positional and social authority in the organization and in the community served, be convened to support a co-created plan.

## Functions of the IE Planning Team

- Planning process design – The IE team can serve to advise the organization on the scope, structure, and timeline of the process.
- Planning process engagement – The IE team may help organizational leaders and managers coordinate meetings and communications, producing materials and other relevant items.
- Inquiry and Change Analysis – The IE team will receive and may seek qualitative and quantitative data to engage in critical reflections on a broad range of processes, practices, programs, and outcomes. The benefit of a team is the capacity to synthesize the information gathered to identify points of affirmation and points of opportunity to measurably contribute to achieving inclusive excellence.
- Strategic Equity and Inclusion Planning – The IE team will facilitate data-driven discussion to develop the content for the IE plan (outcomes, actions, and performance measures).
- Communications – The IE team can serve to communicate with leadership, customers, clients, supporters, and/or community members about the purpose of the process, updates on the process, for information gathering, and for reporting results of the process.

## Selecting IE Planning Team Members

There are different ways to create a core IE planning team. Leaders in the organization can appoint a team, nominations from managers could be sought, or a call for applications across the organization could be used. There are advantages and important considerations for all these approaches and no one best way. Some considerations for the IE Team include:

- Authority – The team will need to ask staff in different areas, programs, and departments to provide information and potentially take some actions. To achieve this upper management can be members of the team and/or explicit and clear authorization can be communicated broadly from the executive.
- Knowledge and Skills – Collectively, IE team members will need to have expert knowledge of the area and how it operates. Some familiarity with equity and inclusion practices and evidence of [intercultural competence](#) will be helpful.
- Time – The IE planning team will need dedicated time for the planning effort. The level of time commitment will vary based on the size of the organization and the scale and depth of the process, but it must be a consideration.
- Representative – The size of the IE planning team will vary but should be broadly representative of the constituency groups that will be the subject of strategic equity and inclusion actions and measures.

# Equity & Inclusion Data Exploration

## Building the Evidence Base

Inclusive Excellence plans to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, or any other organizational transformation effort, are most successful when they reflect and are built upon evidence. Your organization probably already captures a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data about your operations, your staff, your clients/customers, attendees/participants, supporters, and the communities you serve.

One of the first steps in building the evidence base is to take an inventory of the data you have that can inform your plan. If you are not doing so already, you will want to begin to include opportunities for group identity characteristics that matter to be included in the formal and informal data collection programs you have. This allows you to disaggregate the data by identity to find equity gaps. Depending on your organization's mission and goals these can include characteristics such as:

- Race/ethnicity;
- Gender (including non-binary identities);
- Socio-economic status;
- Residency location/Zip Code;
- Sexual-orientation;
- National Origin; and
- Disability status, among others.

Having a solid evidence base will not only help you set your priorities, but it will also provide you with the baseline and tools to measure your progress on any goals and actions you establish for your organization. There are several public databases that could be of assistance to you including [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) information for your workforce, [Census data](#) for the community you serve, and other health and well-being data from your [state](#) or [local planning](#) districts as well as [educational entities](#).

Not all information will be numbers-based, sometimes it will be necessary to capture themes from customer/client narratives, online comments, or other feedback mechanisms. The first step in this process is often to engage in a "data" asset mapping process that aligns information you have, or can access, to the problems or questions you have identified. Some starting questions for this process are:

- What is/are the key issue(s) you are trying to address and why is it important?
- Who is it a problem for? What factors contribute to the problem?
- What data do you have on the problem (format, frequency, granularity, etc.)?
- Who uses or benefits from the data you have?
- What can't you measure but still need to evaluate?
- What new things would you like to count or measure if you could?
- What other data could you use?

# Equity & Inclusion Data Guide

## Purpose of Tool

This tool is designed to support the IE planning team and/or local subject matter experts as they meet with stakeholders and employees to review the data gathered for the IE planning process. The following guide includes examples of the type of data that may be valuable by IE dimension and some reflection questions for the IE planning team, and/or those they engage, to make meaning of the data for the purpose of equity-minded strategic organizational transformation.

## Access + Success

### Examples of Data to Compile/Review

- Composition of workforce/participants/clients/customers by key characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.)
- Compositional trends or changes over time (usually a 3-5-year period) compared to broader trends of the field/industry, community, or related organizations.
- Job applications, hiring, promotion, and other workforce trends by key characteristics
- Career advancement trends (promotions, workforce retention trends)
- Long term trends of outcomes of relationship for clients/participants/supporters of your organization disaggregated by key characteristics

### Reflection Questions

1. What are your initial impressions as you look at the disaggregated compositional data?
2. What organizational processes and procedures are related to the resultant composition found? What resources in terms of money, personnel, time, or other infrastructure are related and within our span of direct action?
3. How does the compositional and trend data compare to the populations we serve as part of our mission? How do they compare to relevant peers or the professional field?
4. What types of support are we providing to individuals? At what points in our process?
5. Are there other sources of evidence that relate to these numbers that we should be considering?
6. What are our hopes for the future in terms of access and success for each constituency within our workforce and those we serve?
7. Are there areas related to our hopes that it seems we are already doing well? Do we know why?
8. For those areas with an opportunity for strategic change, what is the change we need to see in order to realize our hopes?

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## Climate + Intergroup Relations

### Examples of Data to Compile/Review

- Workforce/client/customer/participant/supporter sense of belonging and/or overlap of values with the organization by key characteristics
- Workforce/client/customer/participant/supporter perceptions of feeling respected by/in the organization by key characteristics
- Workforce/client/customer/participant/supporter perceptions of trust in the organization by key characteristics
- Overall satisfaction with the organization by key characteristics

### Reflection Questions

1. What are your initial impressions as you look at the disaggregated cultural climate results?
2. Are there any group identifications where there are noticeable differences in perceptions and experiences? Are there any other groups for which you would like to see data based on past research or experiences?
3. Considering each theme area, are there any strengths or challenges indicated by the data?
4. What organizational processes and procedures are related to the climate themes identified? What resources in terms of money, personnel, time, or other infrastructure are related and within our span of direct action?
5. What types of support are we providing to individuals or groups? At what points in our processes? Who provide this support?
6. What are your hopes for the future in terms of climate and intergroup relations for each constituency we serve?
7. How will improving perceptions in these themes be a benefit to the organization?
8. What is the change we need to see in order to realize our hopes?

# Equity & Inclusion Data Guide

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## Education + Training

### Examples of Data to Compile/Review

- Training and development histories for the workforce
- Topics of past training and development opportunities, retreats, public information sessions hosted by the organization
- Conference participation and professional presentations/models our workforce has given
- Inventory of committees and groups with the organization that relate to equity and inclusion (ex. Affinity group for veterans, or LGBTQ2+ professional network)
- Review of development opportunities supporting collaboration, communication, and inclusion

### Reflection Questions

1. What are your initial impressions as you look at the collection of information on the educational/training that is supporting the capacity of the workforce and those we serve to be more inclusive?
2. What are your initial impressions as you look at the prior topics covered in trainings, retreats, and other development opportunities or public events/offering?
3. Considering the inventory of workplace committees and communities of practice, are there any strengths or areas of opportunity related to advancing equity and inclusion in the profession/service provision?
4. What organizational processes and procedures are related to the areas of education and training? What resources in terms of money, personnel, time, or other infrastructure are related and within our span of direct action?
5. What types of support are we providing to individuals or groups? At what points in our processes? Which positions provide this support?
6. What are your hopes for the future in terms of education and training which contributes to inclusive excellence?
7. What is the change we need to see in order to realize our hopes?

# Equity & Inclusion Data Guide

## Purpose of Tool

This tool is designed to support the IE planning team and/ or local subject matter experts as they meet with stakeholders and employees to review the data gathered for the IE planning process. The following guide includes examples of the type of data that may be valuable by IE dimension and some reflection questions for the IE planning team, and/or those they engage, to make meaning of the data for the purpose of equity-minded strategic organizational transformation.

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## Community + Partnership

### Examples of Data to Compile/Review

- Workforce composition by zip code
- Local spend with Small/Woman/Minority/Veteran/Disability-owned businesses
- Listing of public event(s) held and review of attendance profile (if available)
- Local well-being measures
  - (Example: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/thomas.jefferson.health.district#!/>)
- Amount of grants/sponsorship provided to community partners disaggregated by priorities and/or key characteristics of those served
- Qualitative feedback by key characteristics from social media comments, customer service surveys, and/or any other engagement/satisfaction surveys

### Reflection Questions

1. What are your initial impressions as you look at the results of your analysis of community and partnership data?
2. Are there any strengths or challenges indicated by the data?
3. What organizational process and procedures are related to the data reviewed? What resources in terms of money, personnel, time, or other infrastructure are related and within our span of direct action?
4. Are we able to track all the activity we engage in? If not, what are the important things we may need to track moving forward?
5. What do we know about the community in which we live? How have we previously engaged with community partners or community-based organizations?
6. What are your hopes for the future in terms of community and partnership?
7. What is the change we need to see in order to realize our hopes?

# Engaging your Organization

## Purpose of Tool

The following are a few ideas to consider in planning how you will meaningfully include the input of all voices in your process. You could engage one, all, or other ideas. The goal is engagement from a broad range of voices.

### Focus Groups/Town Halls

#### Benefits

- You get a lot of people at once and can publicize participation in the process
- You can get to deep levels of understanding an issue from multiple perspectives through dialogue
- You can generate a lot of ideas at once

#### Things to Consider

- You will need to organize space and meeting logistics
- You may need facilitators for small group work or note takers
- Not everyone will be able to attend, or equally participate

### Departmental/Affinity Group/Committee Meetings

#### Benefits

- Many meetings will already be scheduled
- Some committees may reflect the key decision-makers for an IE dimension
- You can hear from distinct communities on a broad range of issues (ie LGBTQ network)
- You can signal IE as a priority by making it a topic of sustained discussion

#### Things to Consider

- The timeframe for getting to each area may be long based on pre-scheduled meetings
- A plan for which topics will be covered by group will likely be necessary
- Not everyone will be able to attend, or equally participate
- Notetakers will likely be needed to summarize the discussion

### Electronic Surveys

#### Benefits

- You can structure the format of information gathered
- Anyone with a link can participate
- Multiple topics can be covered at one time
- You have a record of the input received

#### Things to Consider

- It will take time to review the information and comments
- It does not allow for dialogue to explore meaning and context of statements
- If anonymous, it may be hard to ensure all voices are heard or to prevent non-community members from responding

### Publish Plan Publicly for Comments

#### Benefits

- Ideas generated from subject matter experts can be vetted with the community
- A full vision can be articulated and opened to response at one time so ideas are not considered in isolation

#### Things to Consider

- You need to communicate the draft status of the plan so people know it is open to change, if needed.
- You will need to have a mechanism to collect, organize, and respond to feedback

# IE Plan Summary Template

## Introduction

What to include in this section:

- A brief overview of the IE plan and how it advances the organization's mission and vision.
- A short description of the process used to develop the strategic IE plan.

## Self-Assessment

What to include in this section:

- A set of reflections on the organization's current strengths, challenges, opportunities, and needs in relation to equity, inclusion, and diversity issues.
- Lessons learned from the study you engaged that have influenced your strategic IE planning process.
- Key assessment findings for each of the IE framework dimensions that were engaged in the study.

## Goals, Actions, Measures, and Implementation Plan

We recommend an IE plan for a 3-5 year period. Below is an action plan summary reporting template:

### Access + Success

**Vision Statement: [Include Your Organization's Vision as applicable]**

Goals/Objectives	Actions	Outcomes (Data/Metric)	Timeframe(s)	Responsible Office/Position	Funding/Resource Allocation
Goal 1					
Goal 2					

### Climate + Intergroup Relations

**Vision Statement: [Include Your Organization's Vision as applicable]**

Goals/Objectives	Actions	Outcomes (Data/Metric)	Timeframe(s)	Responsible Office/Position	Funding/Resource Allocation
Goal 1					
Goal 2					

# IE Plan Summary Template

## Education + Training

**Vision Statement:** [Include Your Organization's Vision as applicable]

Goals/Objectives	Actions	Outcomes (Data/Metric)	Timeframe(s)	Responsible Office/Position	Funding/Resource Allocation
Goal 1					
Goal 2					

## Infrastructure + Investment

**Vision Statement:** [Include Your Organization's Vision as applicable]

Goals/Objectives	Actions	Outcomes (Data/Metric)	Timeframe(s)	Responsible Office/Position	Funding/Resource Allocation
Goal 1					
Goal 2					

## Community + Partnership

**Vision Statement:** [Include Your Organization's Vision as applicable]

Goals/Objectives	Actions	Outcomes (Data/Metric)	Timeframe(s)	Responsible Office/Position	Funding/Resource Allocation
Goal 1					
Goal 2					

## Communication Plan

In this section provide a brief overview of the ways in which you will communicate your IE plan, progress, and impacts to ensure stakeholders, community partners, and others can stay up to date and participate in the success of the IE plan.

# Goal Development Guide

## Purpose of Tool

This guide is intended to aid in developing concrete actions with clear measures. Use a separate copy of the chart below for each goal you are proposing to address in your strategic IE plan. This worksheet will help you populate the IE plan template.

### 1. PRIORITY YOU ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS

What is the opportunity or challenge, the need, or the new direction you would like to pursue?

*EX: Creating an inclusive and respectful environment where all staff, participants, and customers feel welcomed and valued.*

### 2. RELEVANT FACTORS AND ASSUMPTIONS

What relevant factors impact or are related to this priority?

*EX: Surveys and focus group data suggest concerns about disrespect and exclusionary behaviors directed towards minoritized identities.*

### 3. GOAL(S)

What do you want to achieve or change regarding the above priority?

*EX: Improve relationships, increase respect, and eliminate exclusionary behavior so all report feeling comfortable or very comfortable with the climate of our area.*

# Goal Development Guide

## Purpose of Tool

This guide is intended to aid in developing concrete actions with clear measures. Use a separate copy of the chart below for each goal you are proposing to address in your strategic IE plan. This worksheet will help you populate the IE plan template.

<b>4. STRATEGIES</b> What general strategies or approaches will you use to accomplish your goals? <i>EX: Enhance training on cross-cultural communication and an inclusive environment for all in our area, especially staff managers.</i>	<b>5. SPECIFIC ACTIONS</b> For each strategy, list one or more specific actions or resources you will use to develop or implement it. <i>EX: Invite and incentivize managers to participate in implicit bias training.</i>
<b>6. METRICS</b> What information will you track and review to measure both short- and long-term progress toward your goals? What source(s) will be used? <i>EX: Percentage of employees reporting that they feel comfortable or very comfortable with the climate of the organization.</i>	

# Policy Equity Guide

## Purpose of Tool

This guide is intended to support Infrastructure + Investment planning by looking at your organization's written and unwritten policies with an equity lens. The reflection questions can be used to guide a team discussion or individual written reflection.

### STEP 1. IDENTIFY WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN POLICIES/PRACTICES

#### What policies/practices are in place in our school/unit?

- *What formal written policies govern how our organization is organized, operated and distributes resources and opportunities? (e.g. employee development support)*
- *What unwritten/informal decision-making processes and practices determine how we organize, operate, and distribute resources and opportunities?*

### STEP 2. INDIVIDUALLY EXAMINE FORMAL AND INFORMAL POLICIES/PRACTICES

#### 1. Foundations of the policy/practice:

- *What is the intent behind the policy/practice? What are the desired outcomes?*
- *Who is responsible for policy/practice implementation and oversight?*
- *How is the policy/practice communicated to policy decision makers and individuals impacted by it?*

#### 2. Equity in language:

- *Does the policy/practice make normative/stereotypical assumptions?*
- *What types of words are used to describe individuals/groups identified in the policy/practice?*
- *Is there language that includes or excludes communities that have been historically minoritized? (Ex. "She/He" > "They")*

# Policy Equity Guide

## 3. Data Collection and Reporting

- Who does the policy/practice impact? Who benefits and who does not?
- How is accountability measured? What data are collected to monitor policy/practice implementation and impact?
- Are data disaggregated in collection and reporting? What groups are disaggregated?
- Are there individuals and/or communities that are disproportionately affected by this policy?

## 4. Accountability for Equity

- At what points in the policy/practice are there points of individual discretion? Are those points structured (e.g., there is an evaluation rubric or guideposts for the decision)?
- Does this policy/practice have the potential perpetuate or help dismantle historical, or other barriers? How?

## STEP 3. ADDRESSING INEQUITIES

### **If the policy perpetuates unnecessary barriers or inequities, how can they be mitigated or eliminated?**

What actions will we take to redress the inequities in our formal and informal policies/practices?

# Additional Resources

Association of American Colleges & Universities – Making Excellence Inclusive

<https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>

Local and Regional Government on Race & Equity – Tools and Resources

<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>

Kirwan Institute – Implicit Bias Module Series

<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/>

Center for Urban Education – Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy

[https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final\\_Web.pdf](https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final_Web.pdf)

Racial Equity Tools

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>

Opportunity Agenda – A Communications Toolkit

<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/2019.05.06%20Toolkit%20Without%20Comic%20Book.pdf>

Linked in Learning – Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

([Subscription Based](#) – LinkedIn offers a Free Month Trial)

The Sum – Assessment and Workshops

<https://www.thesum.org/>

The Center for Transformation and Change

<https://drkathyobear.com/resources/>

UVA VP Diversity Learning Resources List

<https://vpdiversity.virginia.edu/learning-resources>



Division for Diversity, Equity, &  
Inclusion