



Diversity [Equity] & Inclusion Task Force Framework

Introduction

The world stood still for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. All of the unspoken truths were on full display for everyone to see. While that moment in time sparked myriad different feelings and emotions, it also galvanized countless individuals and organizations to take an inventory of how diverse and inclusive they actually are.

As with many organizations, FAWCO promoted diversity in the “abstract,” while the values we espoused were not necessarily the ones we practiced. The Diversity & Inclusion Task Force was created not only to help FAWCO address a lack of representation in membership and leadership positions, but to offer concrete actions that each club can take towards becoming inclusive.

The Diversity and Inclusion Framework has been created in order to identify best practices for promoting diversity and inclusion in FAWCO and its sister clubs. This document provides guidelines for demonstrating an understanding of cultural awareness and respect for differences, and for coaching to achieve positive change towards inclusive practices for all. These guidelines should be used to help clubs assess their current efforts and to provide a roadmap of opportunities to be more inclusive. These guidelines are a starting point and are not meant to be comprehensive. Each club and its membership should use these tools to help develop their own D&I initiatives based on the needs of their club. Each club is as different and as varied as the countries in which they are chartered. As such, their needs will be unique. Each club has the responsibility to assess itself and to create a plan of action.

Definitions

Before we can look at actions we can take, we must first make sure that we are working with the same vocabulary. Understanding the concepts and varying acronyms for different groups is important when working to implement inclusive plans.

When introducing the topic to your club or to individuals, encourage them to share their definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Understanding these differences is essential to establishing mutual respect among everyone in your club and creating an inclusive environment for all your members.

Here are a couple of questions to get you started:

- 1. Write down the three key words: diversity, inclusion and equity. Now define them. Write buzzwords, bulleted definitions, whatever comes to mind.**
- 2. What do you notice? Are there clear differences between the terms? Is there some overlap? Do you feel able to explain how they all relate?**

You may find these questions challenging to answer, but don't worry – that is normal. Diversity, inclusion and equity are so often used interchangeably that the only difference seems to be which one is in fashion at any particular time or how they relate to each other. However, being able to look at these "individual" definitions is vital. If we can't distinguish diversity, inclusion and equity as separate concepts and identify how they interact, we won't be able to establish clear goals and strategies to address them.

Diversity is usually understood to explain perspective, representation, tough conversations and supporting inclusion. Inclusion leads people to see the importance of creating environments conducive to feedback, supporting diversity and being open. Equity is usually described as fairness, sameness, and valuing diversity and inclusion. As you can see, it is hard to tell the differences in the meaning. If we can't get on the same page about the language and definitions, we won't be able to take the appropriate steps or find clear solutions.

What is Diversity?

What does the term diversity mean to you? Over the past year, we have seen this word used a lot, but what does it actually mean? How do you define diversity?

Diversity is the presence of difference within a given setting. You can, for example, have a diversity of species within an ecosystem, a diversity of clothing brands in your closet, or a diversity of opinions or experiences. Yet you cannot have a diverse person.

The textbook definition refers to the existence of variations of different characteristics within a group of people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as our race, age, sex, religious/non-religious beliefs, sexual orientation, physical disability and cultural background, along with the other things that shape our identity (e.g., cognitive skills, personality traits and life experiences).

Diversity is a euphemism. People say, "We are working to diversify our club or organization," instead of, "We are working to ensure there are more BIPOC (black, indigenous, and other people of color) in our club and in leadership roles." Stepping away from the euphemism requires us to get more specific and accurate in our goals, which can lead to more substantive and accurate conversations and strategies.

- 1. Take a moment to think about the diversity of your club. What is it like?**
- 2. How do you think your feelings and reactions would change if you were of a different race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion than you are?**

However, being “diverse” does not mean that we are also being inclusive.

What is Inclusion?

Normally, you hear the phrase “diversity and inclusion” as if there were a single meaning. There isn’t. These two terms are distinct: **diverse membership doesn’t automatically form an inclusive club or organization where every member is valued and given opportunities to contribute or thrive.**

Inclusion is about people with different identities being valued, feeling welcomed and being given opportunities or support in your club. Keep in mind that inclusion is not a natural byproduct of diversity. If you have spent a great deal of time, money and energy on creating a diverse membership without changing the environment of the club, you won’t be able to maintain or grow that membership. You have essentially asked people to the party (diversity) but not asked them to dance (inclusion).

To achieve both diversity and inclusion, organizations should have people dedicated to designing anti-discrimination policies across the organization and ensuring that all members get equal opportunities to participate in the club.

What is Equity?

Equity is an approach that ensures everyone access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist and that, as a result, we all don’t all start from the same place. Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and makes a commitment to correct and address the imbalance.

Take a moment to think about your club – from recruitment, membership, outreach, planning and promotions to the smaller things like how you celebrate holidays, run meetings or make introductions. These can be intentionally created to be equitable, resulting in justice for all members, which in turn supports diversity efforts. On the other hand, they may be inequitable, which can create unintended, and often unwanted, outcomes.

The important thing to remember is that both diversity and inclusion are outcomes that we can achieve, whereas equity is a process that we must constantly review and revise in order to ensure that there is opportunity for continued growth and contribution for your members and club.

- 1. Think about a process (or processes) within your organization in which you are a key player or are active in leadership, promotion or recruitment. Identify the points within that process when individual decision-making is used where you need to be conscious of your biases.**
- 2. What do you notice? Are there clear differences between the terms? Is there some overlap? Do you feel able to explain how they all relate?**

3. Can you identify your biases? Have you learned or sought out information you need to make that process more equitable? How will you use what you've learned to create equal opportunity in your club?

There are many interpretations of what diversity, inclusion and equity mean but, for this Task Force, when we speak of D [E] & I, we are referring to racial, ethnic and social diversity and inclusion.

The Phases of Developing a Framework

In general, organizations use diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives both for compliance obligations and to increase the overall bottom line with a more diverse, equitable and inclusive membership. Developing a DE&I initiative involves four main phases:

1. Data collection and analysis to determine the need for change
2. Strategy design to match organizational objectives
3. Implementation of the initiative
4. Evaluation and continuing audit of the plan

Data Collection and Analysis

Your ability to collect and analyze data about your club will vary depending on the bylaws of your local club and the laws that govern data collection and storage. Due to the differing laws and restrictions, we can only provide general suggestions about methodologies you could use to collect data that will help you create opportunities for diversity and inclusion.

1. Surveys and questions
2. A common issue that comes up when talking about diversity is the fact that the majority of clubs are not able to quantify the racial makeup of their clubs. This question is generally not asked, so the majority of the clubs have no starting point. This means that clubs need to figure out the language they can use in obtaining this information.
3. By knowing the “baseline” data of club membership we have a clearer picture of who our members are and how proactive we need to be for recruitment of members.

You can also assess the status of DE&I in your club by answering a few questions:

- 1. Why do we value diversity? Why is it part of our values?**
- 2. For whom are we creating more inclusive environments? How will we ensure that inclusion is real, that we walk our talk?**
- 3. What (systemic) barriers exist that may limit or impede any diversity efforts you're taking? How can we approach this work using equity as our guiding principle? What changes would that require?**

Strategies for Communicating Across Cultures

Communicating across cultures, also referred to as intercultural communication, is a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in both similar and different ways, among themselves, and across cultures. There are several practices you can implement to support strategies for cross-cultural communication in your club, such as:

- Demonstrate a value for diversity
- Communicate respect and show empathy
- Do not judge
- Recognize your own assumptions.
- Explore your own unconscious biases.
- Demonstrate flexibility and tolerate ambiguity.
- Be conscious that humor may be misunderstood

Some tips for additional practices include:

- **Provide an open and safe environment:** Be aware of situations and settings that are uncomfortable. Reduce power dynamics.
- **Focus on understanding:** be nonjudgmental and check tone, style and vocal delivery.
- **Seek first to understand, then be understood:** When interacting with others in a diverse community like FAWCO, it is likely that you will encounter new and/or controversial ideas. Demonstrate a clear understanding of these ideas by actively listening before formulating arguments for or against them. Back up your claims with intelligent arguments. Also, critique ideas rather than individuals.
- **Explore the possibility that what is presented may not be the main issue:** listen to others and give them time to tell their story in their own way and words; trust must develop before others share their vulnerability; trust is earned and developed over time. Identify root or underlying issues that may prevent you from developing a relationship.
- **Acknowledge differences and different experiences:** avoid saying “I know how you feel,” as it is almost always untrue. Most cultural minorities are more skilled in coping in the majority culture than members of the majority culture. Most majority culture members are less skilled in coping within a minority’s culture.
- **Be aware of differences in nonverbal communication patterns** – eye contact and facial expressions.

- **Treat all people with dignity and respect regardless of diversity issues:** keep an open mind; keep it simple; speak to the person in a polite manner; avoid making judgments and assumptions; avoid ethnic, religious, and racial and gender jokes.
- **Respect all people as adults who have the right to make decisions freely:** avoid dictating and giving orders; avoid giving commands.

Identify Needs and/or Areas of Concern

Once data are collected, underrepresented or problematic areas can be identified. To do so, clubs should begin with a high-level review of demographics such as age and race representation and equity, and then continue to drill down by location, position, etc. Identification of problem areas can include questions such as:

- Is the club leadership full of older white females?
- Do you have BIPOC in leadership roles?
- Is the nominating board diverse, and do they seek out diverse nominees for board or leadership positions?
- Do we have anyone with physical disabilities in volunteer or board positions?
- Is our organization welcoming and open to people of all sexual orientations?

Additional information gained from surveys can help identify other areas of concern. Member attitudes on culture may or may not match the survey results. If they do match, then the club has a clearer path to what change is needed; if not, the organization may wish to conduct focus groups to better understand the disconnect. In addition, if results indicate little to no diversity in race, sexual orientation or religion, for example, it is possible that individuals don't trust the organization enough to divulge such personal information. If members do not feel comfortable providing information, you can develop tools to collect data anonymously.

Implementation of Diversity Initiatives

These initiatives look at activities that clubs can engage in that would hopefully increase their exposure to and interaction with BIPOC in their local areas.

Address Policies or Practices Affecting DE&I: FAWCO and member clubs must determine whether there are barriers impeding the opportunities or inclusion of individuals from different demographic groups. Clubs should consider whether any policies or practices need to be eliminated or adjusted. Some examples to start with include:

Unconscious biases: Are there certain activities or programs that are underrepresented in relation to diversity? Is it possible that those making decisions or implementing programs are selecting or passing over individuals based on biases against certain groups? If a particular activity is significantly less diverse, equitable or inclusive than other areas, a review of the practices is warranted.

Club culture: Apparent preferences toward pro-life, traditional marriage and other aspects often associated with religious beliefs can repel candidates of differing beliefs or lifestyles. An annual Christmas party and recognizing only Christian holidays in your club can unintentionally send a message that only Christian members are welcome. Promotional materials and club websites show potential members what they are going to be a part of. Does your club look diverse? Do your promotional materials accurately reflect the culture of your club's members? If the first impression that a new member will see is one of an older, all white and privileged group, will they feel they belong?

Political preferences: While FAWCO is a non-partisan organization, the role that politics play in racism and exclusion can't be overlooked. There is no way to address lack of diversity and inclusion without addressing how political structures have created consistent policies that are designed to benefit "some" while ensuring that "others" are limited in being able to achieve a spot on the "equitable playing field. It is crucial that clubs have methods in place to discuss the politics of discrimination without supporting a particular political party.

Practical Actions Clubs Can Implement

- Complete a brief analysis of the cultural and racial diversity of the club in order to have a baseline. If we do not understand where we are, we can't move forward.
- Ensure that social media and club posts include minority members. People will be more inclined to join a club if they can "see" themselves as members and feel like they are welcomed. This is a simple, actionable item for each club to undertake. Potential members often view our public profiles before deciding to join. Existing members need to be made to feel included and valued. A simple tweak in how/who we post can achieve that.
- Facebook and Instagram club accounts should reflect diversity in all aspects of life. Acknowledging religious holidays other than Christian holidays allows members from all walks of life to feel included and valuable. Similarly, Gay Pride Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the like set the tone that the club welcomes and embraces all cultures and is inclusive of others.
- Make diversity a priority in your club. When recruiting for volunteer positions and board roles, look at minority members. This should still be merit-based recruitment, but structured so that all members are considered without bias. However, seeking out minorities and prioritizing their appointment is more likely to result in a board and a club that reflect the values of DE&I. The more diverse a club is, the healthier it is. Modern organizations recognize that they need to reflect the society they live in and cannot be homogeneous.
- Activities should reflect the diversity of the club. To keep members from all backgrounds engaged, there must be a sense of belonging and acceptance for a variety of cultural norms. These can be as simple as choosing ethnic restaurants, Latin dance classes or excursions into different neighborhoods or as thought provoking as professionally-led group discussions on racism, equality and inclusivity.

- Worldwide shutdowns and travel restrictions have taught us that we can go around the globe online. Seek out online programs that delve into racial equality or that offer cultural glimpses into parts of the world your club might not normally venture to; ask a local museum to virtually curate their art to highlight Africans or people of color. There is no limit to what can be done online, and members are likely to embrace the technology and the message if presented with the opportunity.
- Group discussions should be ongoing and able to respond to current events. Examples of this are diversity-centered book clubs where you choose titles that specifically address this topic and club-sponsored talks that are led by a member/members to delve into the history of racism and how race relations remain unequal in contemporary society. This gives members an outlet to discuss their frustration when events – such as the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 during an arrest by white police officers – spark social outcry.

[The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#)©¹ can provide you with suggestions and resources to educate yourself on the systemic racial barriers and how you can be a part of dismantling this system of oppression.

The 21-Day Toolkit provides you with resources to:

- Read
- Listen
- Watch
- Notice
- Connect
- Engage
- Act
- Reflect
- Stay inspired
- Tips for success

There is also a 21-Day Tracker to help you stay focused during your challenge about what activities you have done each day.

Evaluation of Diversity Initiatives

Now that we have looked at the language and provided some guidance and strategies on how you can look at your club membership, we want to give you some concrete ways in which you can evaluate your efforts. By working through your understanding of differences,

¹ The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge© was created by Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. (#BlackMind) and co-developed with Debby Irving, and Dr. Marguerite Penick (#DiverseSolutions). The plan has been adopted by organizations, associations and corporations all over the nation/world. Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. is the Director of the Privilege Institute in Green Bay, WI. Dr. Moore created the Challenge to not only help people better understand issues surrounding equity, inclusion, privilege, leadership and supremacy, but also to do so in a way that would build a habit of learning by stretching it over 21 days. If you engage in the various activities over the next 21 days, be sure to tag, comment and follow the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge© | Facebook (@21DayREHBC)..

you will be able to see how you can bring clarity to your club's recruitment, promotion and membership.

1. What efforts did your club engage in to support diversity and inclusion?
2. Did you have an equity process? Did it support your diversity and inclusion efforts?
3. For whom are you creating a more inclusive environment?
4. What systemic barriers exist that have limited or impeded any diversity efforts your club made?

You may have additional questions that you can ask once you have implemented changes to your club policies. The main thing to remember is that this is an ongoing process: from analysis to implementation to evaluation. Your club will constantly update and revise your policies and recruitment efforts to reflect the changes that occur within your particular club.

Conclusion

The D&I Task Force would like to thank you for making the effort to implement for your club (or yourself) practices that are more inclusive for everyone. This journey is not easy. The problems won't be solved overnight, but if we commit to being open to change, we are positive that we can create a FAWCO that is truly representative of the world and the communities where we live.

We encourage you to share these resources with your members and leadership. If you have additional resources that you find helpful, please share them here so that others can benefit from that knowledge. The important thing is that this is a "living resource," in that it can be constantly updated to reflect current educational and anti-racism resources.

Thank you!

Diversity & Inclusion Task Force Team