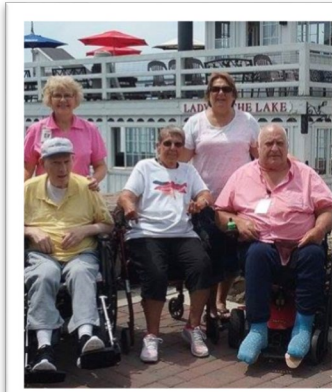




# BUILDING COMMUNITY

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
(DEI) Guide  
for Inclusive Employers





# INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a fact.  
Equity is a choice.  
Inclusion is an action.  
**Belonging is an outcome.**  
--Arthur Chan

As a community with little racial diversity, North Iowa is striving to be more welcoming to ALL kinds of people. Workforce attraction and retention is our most pressing need to achieve economic growth and prosperity for our citizens.

Conversations about solving diversity problems typically start with, “How can we hire more minorities?” but some of the most successful efforts don’t start with hiring at all. They start with inclusion. The Building Comm**UNITY** effort is about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—commonly referred to as DEI.

The Chamber of Commerce is on a mission to help other companies do their best hiring. We are constantly thinking about how we can attract and retain workers in North Iowa. In speaking with a myriad of talent professionals, we’re struck by a common theme: people are more aware of, and committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) than ever.

DEI will be a critical consideration of ongoing business strategy for our members and the North Iowa community. This guide is intended to provide examples of best practices to help guide your DEI journey.

## Getting Started—Building an Inclusive Environment

### 1. Provide a confidential “unconscious bias” self-test for current employees.

Without an inclusive culture, you simply compound your diversity issues with retention challenges. If your culture doesn't welcome and develop a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and ideas, what will make those hires stay?

Building an inclusive culture that attracts diversity is a business imperative, too. A study by McKinsey found that gender-diverse companies were 15% more likely to outperform their national industry median, and ethnically diverse companies were 35% more likely to outperform. Before allocating resources towards diversity recruiting, turn your focus inward. Think about whether your culture can retain ALL of your great talent, whether they happen to be underrepresented or not.

#### Day-to-Day Equality Reality Check

Every company will claim to be a meritocracy, but it takes an honest look at yourself to determine whether all of your employees truly have equal access to rewards and opportunities. Realizing you have room for improvement shouldn't be shameful. It's what you do with the realization that matters.

Here's one place to start: take a look around your workplace and see who's picking up the slack for administrative work. Many companies have rightfully focused on compensation policies as a driver of equality. However, fairness also manifests itself in smaller things, like who's taking on more of the extra administrative work or even doing chores around the office.

In their joint piece in *The New York Times*, Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant noted that women end up doing more of the “office housework,” and get little payoff for it. “Someone has to take notes, serve on committees and plan meetings — and just as happens with housework, that someone is usually a woman.”

Small moments matter. What message is sent to employees if every day it is only the female colleagues doing kitchen chores and running the dishwasher? Consider assigning these tasks to women, men, new hires, veteran employees, and executives to share equally.

Here's another example: Analyze what behavior you reward and how promotion decisions are made. Consider who's being promoted in the organization, and how those decisions are made. Is it the people who spend the most time in the office? Those who self-nominate for promotions? The loudest voices in the room? If so, who are you inadvertently holding back?

Employees with childcare responsibilities may need more flexible hours. Meetings are often dominated by a few assertive voices, so people with softer communication styles may have great ideas that go unheard. And as Sheryl Sandberg notes in her book, *Lean In*, women are less likely than men to nominate themselves for promotions, so they may lose out on advancement opportunities. The key to equality in the workplace is looking at all scopes. Even the most well-intentioned companies discover discrepancies between the equality they want and the equality that exists. Open yourself up to finding these inequalities so that you can take steps to fix them.

One way to start good discussion is to provide access to an “unconscious bias” self-test for current employees. These Implicit tests enable participants to take a variety of tests that detect implicit biases regarding race, age, weight, transgender, religion, etc.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

## Walk the Talk

### 2. Adopt a DEI policy for your business.

Take the time to audit your current Mission, Vision, and Values Statement and determine if you need to incorporate a DEI policy (if it is not already included.) Following are some sample policies.

#### **SAMPLE 1:**

##### *Our Value Statement*

COMPANY NAME values the thoughts and contributions of all people and understands that inclusion is critical to sustainable success. It is through our diverse culture that we can attract the best employees, empower our customers, and help our community achieve great things.

##### *Our Commitment*

COMPANY NAME is committed to reflecting the diversity of the North Iowa region and the investors and customers of COMPANY NAME. This means there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of this organization based on economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or any other characteristic. Further, it means we shall take deliberate steps to ensure that the COMPANY NAME staff, board, and initiatives are diverse and appropriately reflective of our values, the region, and investors we serve.

##### *Our Expectations*

COMPANY NAME expects its employees to reflect the values of COMPANY NAME and to provide an easy pathway for belonging by, at a minimum:

- Establishing, publicizing, and enforcing its anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.
- Seeking out and utilizing talent from all backgrounds to facilitate building a diverse and productive workforce.
- Establishing protocols and offering internal and external programming/initiatives that signify and foster authentic inclusion.
- Seeking and endeavoring to promote qualified diverse individuals to serve in all areas of the organization.
- Leveraging workforce talent to achieve successful business outcomes by reaching into new and expanding markets.
- Promoting strategic alliances that value and improve the quality of life for all who live in North Iowa.

## **SAMPLE 2:**

COMPANY NAME is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI.)

Our human capital is our most valuable asset. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, inventiveness, innovation, self-expression, unique capabilities, and talent that our employees invest in their work represents a significant part of not only our culture, but our reputation and company's achievement as well.

We embrace and encourage our employees' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

COMPANY NAME diversity initiatives are applicable—but not limited to—our practices and policies on recruitment and selection; compensation and benefits; professional development and training; promotions; social and recreational programs; layoffs; terminations; and the ongoing development of a work environment built on the premise of gender and diversity equity that encourages and enforces:

- Respectful communication and cooperation between all employees.
- Teamwork and employee participation that permits the representation of all groups and employee perspectives.
- Work/life balance through flexibility to accommodate employees' varying needs.
- Employer and employee contributions to the communities we serve to promote a greater understanding and respect for diversity.

All employees of COMPANY NAME have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect at all times. All employees are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion during work, at work functions on or off the work site, and at all other COMPANY NAME-sponsored and participative events. All employees are also required to attend and complete company-offered diversity awareness training to enhance their knowledge to fulfill this responsibility.

Any employee found to have exhibited any inappropriate conduct or behavior against others may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees who believe they have been subjected to any kind of discrimination that conflicts with the company's diversity policy and initiatives should seek assistance from NAME(S) OF POSITION(S).

### 3. Take the BUILDING COMMUNITY DEI Pledge, and commit to on-going DEI training and efforts.

#### The Building Community Pledge

We recognize that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are multifaceted issues and that we need to tackle these subjects holistically to better engage and support all underrepresented groups within our business. We agree that we must do more to make North Iowa more inclusive. This means committing to four goals we believe will catalyze further conversations and actions around DEI within the workplace and the North Iowa region:

**We will continue to make our workplaces trusting places to have complex, and sometimes difficult, conversations about DEI:** We will create and maintain environments, platforms, and forums where our people feel comfortable reaching out to their colleagues to gain greater awareness of each other's experiences and perspectives. By encouraging an ongoing dialogue and not tolerating any incongruence with these values, we are building trust, encouraging compassion and open-mindedness, and reinforcing our commitment to a culture of inclusivity.

**We will implement and expand unconscious bias education:** Experts tell us that we all have unconscious biases -- that is human nature. Unconscious bias education enables individuals to begin recognizing, acknowledging, and therefore minimizing any potential blind spots he or she might have, but wasn't aware of previously. We will commit to rolling out and/or expanding unconscious bias education within our companies in the form that best fits our specific culture and business. By helping our employees recognize and minimize their blind spots, we aim to facilitate more open and honest conversations.

**We will share best—and unsuccessful—practices:** whether we have current DEI initiatives or are just starting to develop our strategies, we will commit to helping other companies evolve and enhance their current diversity strategies and encourage them, in turn, to share their successes and challenges with others.

**We will create and share strategic inclusion and diversity plans with our company leadership.** We will work with our owners, board of directors, or equivalent governing bodies, through the development and evaluation of concrete, strategic action plans to prioritize and drive accountability around DEI. Given the shared responsibility for driving strategies that help companies thrive, leadership plays an important role in driving action together to cultivate inclusive cultures and talent. We also pledge to create accountability systems within our organization to track our progress.

We recognize these four commitments are not the complete answer, but we believe they are important, concrete steps toward building more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, we stand ready to come together to make good on the inherent promise that all workers in North Iowa should be able to bring their best selves to work and unleash their full potential.

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Signed

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Dated



## 4. Next Steps

DEI should be an important function of every business, just like marketing, finance, sales, etc. and should be led by a dedicated professional whenever possible to achieve the best results. However, most of the businesses in North Iowa are small and medium-size organizations that cannot afford to hire a full-time person and may not have a Human Resources professional on staff.

The Chamber's Worksite Wellness Committee will provide initial and on-going DEI training to support Chamber members in their endeavor to become inclusive employers. In addition, the Chamber will provide resources to assist businesses of all sizes on its website.

Any Chamber member that completes the steps outlined in this DEI Guide and commits to operating as an inclusive employer as part of the Building COMMUNITY initiative, is invited to take advantage of the Certified Inclusive Employer Toolkit which includes:

1. Certified Inclusive Employer door/window clings
2. Electronic Certified Inclusive Employer graphic for use in email signature lines, websites, employment application materials, etc.
3. Sample news release
4. Sample newsletter articles
5. Free admission to DEI seminars presented by the Chamber's Worksite Wellness Committee.

