Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Chapter Toolkit

January 2022

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Introduction

The UNA-USA Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Task Force created this chapter toolkit to guide UNA Chapters in their efforts to integrate the principles of DEAI in all aspects of their programs. This toolkit offers suggestions for chapters on how to be mindful of members' accessibility needs by providing the necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments that enable equal participation for all members.

They invite you to explore the contents of this toolkit and encourage you to be deliberate in your planning so that the results yield greater diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusions for all members of the United Nations Association of the United States of America.

The National Office is available to address any questions and to support the needs of your DEAI planning. To this end, please email any ideas, questions, or reactions to this report to membership@unausa.org .

The UNA-USA DEAI Task Force looks forward to learning with you and to making the UNA-USA the most diverse, inclusive, and welcoming organization that we envision.

UNA-USA's DEAI Statement

As advocates of the United Nations and stewards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) affirms its commitment to build a culture to engage and support all members and stakeholders regardless of race, creed, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, religion, marital status, political opinion, national origin, socio-economic status, or any other protected characteristics. Our goal is to ensure an organizational environment where members and stakeholders feel valued and empowered to support the principles and work of the United Nations, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.[1]

Terms To Be Familiar With

- Diversity is the representation of all our varied identities and differences (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, tribe, caste, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles, etc.), collectively and as individuals.
- Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to information and resources for all.
- Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people.[2]
- Accessibility seeks to enable all persons to participate fully in all aspects of life, on an equal basis with others, by taking measures which include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers in access to resources and opportunities.[3]
- Intersectionality is the interaction of multiple factors, such as disability, age and gender, which can create multiple layers of discrimination, and, depending on the context, worsen legal, social or cultural barriers. [4]
- Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Implicit bias can cause individuals to unknowingly act in discriminatory ways.[5]
- Microaggressions are everyday exchanges that cue a sense of subordination based on any one of a number of social identities, including: race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, nationality, religion, and disability.[6]

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[1] Source: UNA-USA Diversity Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Plan
[2] Source: Ford Foundation
[3] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 9 – Accessibility
[4] Source: UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines
[5] Source: Kirwan Institute at Ohio State University
[6] Source: Brown University

Inclusive Communications

- Whenever possible, use a range of media and a variety of accessible formats to convey information.

  For example: Persons who are deaf may find information more accessible when information is provided in a video format with sign language, rather than in a text format. Adding visually textured patterns to pie charts or underlining color-coded hyperlinks will ensure that persons with color blindness receive the same information as others. Providing Braille and large-print versions of your handouts, or providing accessible electronic versions in advance, will ensure that persons who are blind or have low vision receive the same information as everyone else in advance.[7]

- Make sure that all communications describe persons with disabilities accurately. For example, most organizations are transitioning away from using terms such as "differently-abled" after persons with disabilities indicated that these terms felt overly-positive and patronizing.

  For the most up-to-date terminology on disability inclusion, refer to the UN Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines[8] and the UN Terminology Database.[9] UNTERM is a multilingual terminology database.

- Create a multilingual environment. Translations of important communications, including the website, should be available in major languages spoken among members. Also include multilingual signage for in-person and virtual events.

- To make websites accessible, follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.[10] For a comprehensive guide to creating accessible UN websites, see the Accessibility Guidelines for United Nations Websites.[11]

- Never rely only on color to communicate data or actions. Simple improvements can help persons who are blind or have low vision, or who have color blindness or a cognitive disability, to receive

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[7] Source: UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines
[8] UN Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines
[9] UN Terminology Database
[10] Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1
[11] Accessibility Guidelines for UN Websites

your information as you intend. Color contrast assists persons with color blindness or low vision. Text can be read more easily when the text and background contrasts well. The contrast should increase as the text font becomes smaller. Color contrasts recommendations are provided in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

- When presenting information, do not employ audio alone. Use written texts or interpreters. Several interpretation options are open to you:

  1. Sign language interpretation. Remember to position the interpreter close to the person speaking and in front of a dark background. In the case of an event for which sign language interpretation is required, book interpreters early and provide them with event materials such as handouts, speech outlines, PowerPoint presentations, and any other material that they will need to prepare.

     Note: Sign languages vary significantly. International Sign is commonly used at UN Headquarters and in global meetings. Ask local OPDs (Organization of Persons with Disabilities) to help you find the right interpretation system to use at regional events.

  2. Closed captions (CC). Closed captions are created to allow deaf and hard-of-hearing people to experience spoken/audio multimedia. Closed captions should be visually accessible; for example, white text may be used on a black background to heighten contrast.

     Closed captions, unlike subtitles, include background sounds and notifications of speaker changes. Therefore, closed captions, unlike subtitles, are accessible for people who cannot hear audio.

     Closed captions are not suitable to replace sign language interpretation. For example, someone who uses International sign language may not be comfortable reading captions in English.

     Several shared platforms (including Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Zoom) can create captions using artificial intelligence (AI). However, AI technology, while free and convenient, still needs improvement. Human translators continue to offer the most reliable interpretation and transcription.

  3. Subtitles. These are designed for viewers who hear audio but are unfamiliar with the language being spoken. Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH) combine captions and subtitles and are suitable for persons with hearing impairments as well as multilingual audiences.

  4. Transcripts. These may be useful for audience members or others after an event as a record of the proceedings. There are many free and low-cost online transcription services that

transcribe audio or video files into text files. For example, 'Otter.ai' is a free transcription service.

If budget allows, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) can be used. This technology translates spoken words into text in real time. This text can be displayed on a big screen during in-person events and streamed to an Internet browser during virtual events. If you are using CART, arrange for a CART writer ahead of the event and ensure that the CART writer is a Certified Realtime Captioner with a CRC certification.[12]

- Use equitable language in all official communications. Create digital safe spaces by encouraging employees to add pronouns to their email signatures and usernames. Use the preferred pronouns for employees and members.

- Regularly screen internal and external communications for insensitive, offensive, or biased language. A feasible option would be to create a process for members to directly report any such cases to a relevant authority at the chapter level.

- Ask for and use a person's desired pronouns. If pronouns are not known, use the neutral "they/them/their" until they are known.

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[12] Captioning and CART - Hearing Loss Association of America

Meetings and Events

Planning

- Where possible, chapters should commit to making events hybrid (virtual and in-person). This would make it easier for members to participate by providing an option to either commute to the event or join virtually.

- When appropriate, meeting materials should be distributed among participants in advance. These include reading materials, the list of participants, the agenda, and information about the required technology. Distributing preparatory materials in advance would be helpful for participants to process the information before meaningfully engaging with it.

- Ensure the representation of diverse speakers in events. For example, check whether a panel has gender parity or whether persons with disabilities are represented. The UNA-USA DEAI Membership Survey, conducted in June-July 2021, found that the majority of members believe chapters can improve the representation of diverse identities in events and online forums.

- Prior to the event, provide a map or route to the venue. You can also list different modes of transportation that members can avail to get to the venue. Google Maps has a feature that provides "wheelchair accessible" routes in transit navigation. These routes can be shared with members in advance.

- Ensure there is a designated space for attendees that need ADA access (for example, if there is not already a space where an attendee in a wheelchair can sit, create a space by moving chairs and leaving space open instead for wheelchairs). Chapters can also ask on registration forms if there is any ADA assistance/accommodations needed to help them plan (ASL interpretation, wheelchair seating, etc.) as an optional question.

- Based on the requirements of the event, book captioning services or sign language interpreters in advance. Ask providers to connect to calls prior to the event to test the arrangements.

- At the beginning of online events and meetings, explain to participants how they can activate and use technological features or provide instructions in the meeting invitation.

- The venue should be accessible. Assess entrances, toilets, and emergency exits. Make sure that emergency procedures are appropriate and accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Evaluate the physical accessibility of the meeting room. Consider the audience and speakers. Arrange the seating to make sure presenters are visible. If required, connect a video feed and monitors. Ensure speakers can access the platform or stage. Provide ramps, raised stands and adjustable microphone stands as necessary. Make sure that wireless presentation remotes, audience microphones and other forms of technological support are accessible.

- Assess the accessibility of office technology. Run the accessibility checker in Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, Excel and other Microsoft products.[13][14][15] Regularly check online support resources for updates. It will scan for and identify inaccessible items and explain what needs to be done to make them accessible. For example, it will show where and how to insert alt text into a graphic. (Note: Current accessibility checkers may not find all accessibility issues. However, they are being improved all the time.)

- UNA-USA's COVID-19 Event Guide for Chapters[16] provides helpful guidelines for how to organize events safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- If providing food, ensure it is culturally-appropriate food options for events, such as halal and kosher foods. Develop "tip sheets" that outline dietary restrictions. This would help accommodate members' religious beliefs and ensure that work-related functions like lunches meet their dietary needs and are not uncomfortable or exclusionary.

- Make sure office and in-person events are wheelchair-accessible, especially common areas like the kitchen and restrooms. Buildings can include small steps or uneven floors that present major mobility obstacles. Even a building that is ADA-compliant can have crowded corridors and corners.

- For events, try to contract from vendors/providers who are committed to diversity, especially those owned by women, POC, youth, people with disabilities.

Procedures

- Start events with an Indigenous land acknowledgement. For example, "UNA-USA [Chapter] would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of XX Nations. We invite you to take a

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[13] [Microsoft Accessibility Checker](#)
[14] [Microsoft Disability Answer Desk](#)
[15] [Accessibility Support for PowerPoint](#)
[16] [Guidance for UNA-USA Chapters on Events and Activities During COVID-19 Outbreak.](#)

moment to look up what territory you are living on using the Native Land[17] website." In virtual events, then place your territory in the chat.

- Provide guidelines and expectations ahead of time to speakers on inclusive language for example, not using in their remarks gender exclusive phrases such as 'ladies and gentleman' and reminding them not to assume someone's gender and using they/them/their unless the person has stated their gender.

- Include speakers' pronouns on any bios and slides.

- For long events (events that last longer than 3 hours), allocate a quiet space that can serve as a lactation room, a prayer or meditation space, or a quiet space.

- Always include regular breaks for interpreters and CART providers.

- In smaller virtual meetings, ask individuals to announce themselves before they make their remarks. This helps people who cannot recognize voices easily, or who are using captions or sign language interpretation, to identify the speaker.

- In virtual meetings, participants should be expected to pin their screens when speaking so that it is easy to identify the speaker.

- Offer participants different ways to participate (raising questions, using the chat function, submitting documents, etc.).

- When presenting, ensure that each slide has a unique title so that persons using assistive technology can skip quickly to slides you refer to.

- To make longer documents accessible, you can create accessible PDF versions. An accessible PDF includes a reading order, structure tags and headings, and document settings (such as language). Each of these helps assistive devices to process the document correctly.

- For larger virtual meetings, record the meeting and provide copies of documents or transcripts afterwards.

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[17] Native Land is a resource to learn more about Indigenous territories, languages, lands, and ways of life.

Operations, Policies, and Procedures

- Chapters should reference their non-discrimination policy in their bylaws as a requirement for leaders to follow, particularly in the section around removal of officers. As bylaws are legally governing documents, this allows them to remove officers if needed if they do not adhere to the policy. Reference to the discrimination reporting and procedures policy should also be made in the bylaws.

- Develop and communicate a procedure that members can follow to report incidents of bias and/or discrimination.

- Culturally and religiously significant holidays (important religious days include Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Eid-al-Fitr, Eid-al-Adha, Ramadan, Muharram, and Diwali) can be acknowledged on the official calendar to increase awareness and help set meeting schedules.

- Reach out to teleworkers/online members to make sure they have the right technology to participate fully in virtual meetings and events or if they need any assistance or troubleshooting.

Outreach

- Develop recruitment plans to actively target under-represented populations such as HBUs, HSIs, TCUs, and colleges for the deaf. Start by adding school representatives to the email list, invite them to online events and alert them of open job and internship opportunities.

- The people conducting the recruitment process and interviews can receive implicit bias training (see Education and Training section).

- To retain new members from under-represented communities, have long-term mentorship programs to help them build networks within the organization. At the time of leaving, can organize exit interviews.

- Support public policy or DEAI efforts in communities where recruitment efforts are targeted.

- Provide multiple opportunities and formats for members to share input, participate in the planning and implementation process, and learn about progress and ongoing challenges.

- Check in regularly with members through anonymous questionnaires. Plan communications, forums, activities, or programs in response to concerns or incidents that may arise within and beyond chapters.

- Disseminate surveys among all members and make sure that respondents who complete the survey are informed of the results. Make sure that surveys and other data collection initiatives are aligned with WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards.[18] Formats should also be flexible.

  1. Make available the purpose of the survey and a consent form (as well as terms of use where relevant). Write these texts in plain language.
  2. Make sure that data remains confidential in compliance with data protection rules.
  3. Where relevant, consider producing a short introductory video to explain the purpose of the survey and guide respondents on how to respond. Disseminate information about the survey in accessible formats.

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[18] Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1

4. Plan the duration of the survey carefully. Allow enough time to make respondents aware of the survey and give them enough time to complete it. All respondents should be allowed to complete the survey at their own pace.
5. If possible, the survey should ideally contain no more than 10 questions.
6. When drafting questions, be mindful and intentional with the questions you ask. Ensure questions are clearly-worded and relevant.
7. When necessary, consider alternative methods for collecting data. Certain groups may respond more readily in focus groups or webinar discussions.

Leadership

- When aiming for more diversity in chapter leadership, chapters need to consider the full scope of diversity. This includes all types of diversity: age, disability status, educational experience, religion, parent/family caregiver status, socioeconomic background, veteran status etc. Adding to the chapter's diversity in this way increases the potential to succeed and brings in fresh perspectives.

- Chapter leaders must deepen their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion within their environments. Leaders must embody this commitment to DEAI by modeling the following attributes: collaboration, cultural intelligence, cognition of bias, curiosity, and courage.

- Diversity goals should be stated clearly and often by leadership.

- In meetings and communications, chapter leadership should regularly make members aware of upcoming events or programs in which they can get involved, for example by directing members to resources on the organization website or calendar.

- Chapter leadership has a major role in ensuring that policies and practices are fair and empowering. They must critically assess who is being heard and who isn't within the chapter.

- Regularly facilitate member engagement and surveys to gather important feedback for assessing DEAI efforts.

- Bring in diversity implementation experts, if the chapter budget allows. Diversity and inclusivity consultants have the resources, knowledge and sensitivity to navigate the conversations and changes that come with starting a diversity program.

- Diversify your talent pipeline by recruiting from women's colleges, historically black colleges and universities and other schools with minority student bodies. Leaders should be intentional about promoting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) into more leadership positions. Talent acquisition and retention are equally important; make strategies to increase retention of diverse members.

- To ensure your chapter leaders are diverse, network outside of your chapter/organization. Tap into organizations you are not already connected to.

- Leaders at all levels within the chapter have an essential role to play in creating a culture of inclusion. They should communicate with members about their experiences and question chapter leaders about the progress the chapter is making in improving the representation, visibility, and voice of minority groups within the chapter.

Education and Training

- Diversity, equity and inclusion training helps members at all levels to work better within the organization. It aims to build awareness and skills which support members of differing identities and backgrounds and help to cultivate a safe, compassionate, and equitable culture in which everyone feels valued.[19]

- Chapter leaders should be conscious of what team members have to say and solicit their feedback on the chapter's DEAI strategy. Members should be allies in the chapter's DEAI efforts. Undergoing DEAI training should not feel forced, time-consuming or burdensome. Therefore, training workshops should be organized and scheduled such that they do not interfere with anyone's work responsibilities.

- Every chapter has unique needs for training. Identify areas which need work in your chapter. The most common topics addressed in DEAI training include:

  1. Unconscious and implicit bias
  2. The meaning of diversity, equity and inclusion
  3. Stereotyping
  4. Reducing prejudice
  5. Cultural awareness and belonging
  6. Addressing microaggressions
  7. Anti-harassment

- Leadership should have multiple DEAI training tactics in their toolkit:[20] Here are different focuses that your training can have:

  1. Common ground training is based on finding similar priorities, values, and goals to help align colleagues and get everyone on the same path forward.
  2. Facilitated conversation training creates an open space for less vocal employees to be heard, issues to be brought up, concerns voiced, and feedback given.

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[19] [8 Types of DEI Training to Implement Within Your Organization](#)
[20] [8 Types of DEI Training to Implement Within Your Organization](#)

3. Cultural sensitivity training helps members of a dominant group at your organization to understand how to be better and empathize with colleagues of under-represented cultures, backgrounds or identities.
4. Unconscious bias training aims to uncover and identify the subconscious ways in which we engage in biased or oppressive behaviors and practices.
5. Accommodation training empowers diverse employees to advocate for how they can be better accommodated in the workplace. It allows employees with different physical, environmental or religious needs to drive the creation of spaces in which they feel comfortable and safe.
6. Inclusive management training helps supervisors to recognize discriminatory or oppressive management practices and "dismantle biased systems" within the workplace.
7. Community engagement training goes beyond your internal organization and encourages team members to look at how your business can serve the greater community through the lens of DEI.
8. Anti-oppression is an advanced type of training that teaches employees how to go from ally to collaborator and take an active stance in supporting and uplifting their marginalized colleagues. This type of training frequently covers subjects such as anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-transphobia and more.
9. Incorporate DEAI training in the new member orientation process. This could be in the form of providing an information packet or videos to watch.

- Measuring the impact of DEAI training is equally important. Develop your metric for measuring impact based on the focuses of your training. A few key metrics are:

  1. Has the diversity percentage in all levels of leadership improved?
  2. Retention: do members enjoy their role in their organization and feel they have equal opportunities for advancement?
  3. Has program engagement increased since DEAI training was implemented?
  4. Feedback: do members feel served by DEAI initiatives? What demographics think DEAI efforts have been successful?

- Encourage new and existing members to familiarize themselves with the Code of Ethics on the UNA-USA website.

- Curate and regularly update resources to facilitate conversations and education on DEAI. Examples of anti-racism resources and readings include:

  1. [#31DaysIBPOC: Indigenous, Black, and People of Color (IBPOC) controlling our own narratives.](#)
  2. [How To Overcome Islamophobia In Your Workplace](#)
  3. [Black Lives Matter Resources](#)

4. [Anti-Racism Project: Resources](#)

Acknowledgments

UNA-USA Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Task Force:
Rachel Bowen Pittman, Executive Director, UNA-USA
Troy Wolfe, Senior Director, Partnerships and Special initiatives, UNA-USA
Katrina Finch, Community Engagement Manager, UNA-USA
Paula Boland, Chair, UNA-USA National Council
Teta Banks, Immediate Past Chair, UNA-USA National Council
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