

# Dollars & Sense - Inclusive Growth: Embedding Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in your Economic Development Strategy

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## ABOUT ME...

CHATTANOOGA NATIVE · SON · HUSBAND · FATHER · BROTHER · CHRISTIAN ·  
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LAKERS STAN · NONPROFIT FOUNDER · PRACTICAL APPLICATOR · YP  
ADVOCATE · ENTREPRENEURIAL · DECISION-MAKER · HARDLY HOME, ALWAYS  
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BUILDER · TEAM PLAYER · DOPE

## Why This Matters Now

- Inclusive economies grow faster and last longer
- DEI = smart economic strategy
- Urban and rural places both face equity gaps



## What We'll Cover

1. State of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
2. Framing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Economic Development
3. Three pillars of inclusive growth
4. Best Practices
5. Next Steps

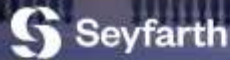


## Rules of Engagement

- We will...
  - Listen to Understand
  - Extend Grace
  - Dialogue Authentically
  - Question with Sincerity
  - Lean into Triggers
  - Activate the Learning (DO THE WORK)



**Current State of Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion**



## Executive Orders on DEI

Impact of Sections 3 and 4 of EO 14173: "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity"

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## Targeted Practices

### Aspirational Goals

- "Increasing representation of Black and Latinx associates..."
- "Increase the racial diversity of our leadership team ... in support of our current goal of 30% representation"
- We are "targeting" X% of leadership roles to be "filled by people of color, while also achieving gender parity"
- Publicized numerical targets for minorities in hiring and promotion decisions

### Diverse Slates

- We ... strive to present a "diverse slate of candidates"
- "[G]oal of having diverse candidate slates for at least 90% of [leadership positions.]"
- "Manipulates" "interview panels and candidate slates" to promote diversity
- Diversity requirements for the composition of hiring panels and candidate pools

### Supplier Diversity

- "Increasing representation of Black and Latinx" suppliers
- Increase "spending with minority-owned businesses"
- Prioritizing "diverse suppliers"
- Supplier diversity program with race-based eligibility requirements

**References:** AFL EEOC Complaint Letters; February 5, 2025 OPM Memo; and AAER & State of Missouri Lawsuits

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## Targeted Practices

### Development Programs

- "Formal mentorship" and "leadership development" for "historically underrepresented groups"
- Business training for "diverse ... talent"
- "Accelerated development program" for "racially diverse management talent"

### Internships & Fellowships

- Limiting fellowship programs to only "Black or African American" graduates
- "Diverse" "internship program"
- Program limited to "Black, Hispanic, Native American and/or LGBTQ+" students

### ERGs

- Majority of employee groups are focused on race, color, national origin or sex, but no group exists for "white heterosexual males"
- Attendance is restricted by protected characteristic; attendees are segregated during events
- Drawing distinctions based on protected status in granting permissions to form groups or permit certain events

**References:** AFL EEOC Complaint Letters and February 5, 2025 OPM Memo

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## EEOC Acting Chair Andrea Lucas Describes Specific Inclusive Policies and Practices Consistent with Federal Law



- Audit all job descriptions to remove unnecessary job requirements;
- Audit job descriptions, job ads, and interview questions for race and gender references;
- Standardize interview questions for similar positions and remove "cultural fit" or other subjective interview questions;
- Standardize promotion and internal hiring policies. Consider posting all internal job openings and requiring opt-out methods for in-line promotions instead of opt-in methods;
- Ensure mentorship and fellowship program opportunities are open to all;
- Institute equal opportunity programs;
- Standardize leadership development trainings and offer them to all employees;
- Consider focusing mentorship, fellowship, and other DEI programs on "first-generation" employees in a given field (versus restricting to minority group members);
- Individualized training based on skills, performance and qualifications;
- Privileged audits to identify areas with existing discrimination or harassment issues/complaints; and
- Widen the pool of job applicants by expanding the colleges and geographic areas that are sources, including advertising jobs in a wider variety of formats and locations.

**References:** March 1, 2024 "Employment Law Now" Podcast Episode, "DEI Perspectives from EEOC Commissioner Andrea Lucas" and May 22, 2024 Bloomberg Law Coverage of New York University School of Law Conference

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## Potential Risk Spectrum for Programs and Practices

A detailed, program-by-program analysis is required to properly assess legal compliance and risks



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## 3 Pillars of Inclusive Economic Development

- Representation – Who's at the table?
- Access – Who gets resources, capital, support?
- Inclusion (Narrative + Belonging) – Who sees themselves in a positive way in your story?



Group Share Out.....

Which of these pillars is the biggest opportunity for growth and why?



## Highlighted Best Practice

- Intercity Visits
  - Real World Learning
  - Relationship Building Across Sectors
  - Competitive Benchmarking
  - Inspiration to Action



## Other Best Practices

- Cluster or Industry Sector Roundtables
- Community Asset Mapping
- Workforce Alignment Workshops



**Everything you want is on  
the other side of hard.**

**- Monty Williams**

**Connect with Me....**

