



Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Policy Template

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1. An important note on research and content

This sample policy is designed for a small arts organization. The language in this template is a good starting point for your nonprofit, but it should be adapted to fit your organization's culture, mission, strategy, and policies. It should also be thoroughly discussed and reviewed by all relevant parties at your organization. A larger organization might have more policies and stipulations around diversity, inclusion, and equity than the small arts organization example used in this template. Your policy might be one page long or it might be several.

It could be a good idea to conduct exercises with employees and a readiness checklist before preparing your diversity, inclusion, and equity plan.

Reference to the sample organization used in this template will be denoted as [arts organization].

2. Content sources used

- [National Council of Nonprofits](#)

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3. What is diversity, inclusion, and equity?

Before creating your statement and policy, it's important to have a basic understanding of what those three words mean and the differences between them.

[General Assembly](#) provides detailed information on the differences between these terms. The results are summarized below.

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of difference within a given setting. In this case the workplace is the setting and the differences typically refer to identity like race and gender, and sometimes ethnicity, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation. A person isn't diverse. They're unique. They can bring diversity to a group though. You're not looking for a diverse candidate. Diversity is about a collective or a group.

Inclusion

Inclusion has to do with people with different identities feeling and/or being valued, leveraged, and welcomed within a given setting (whether that's a team, workplace, or industry). Longtime Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion educator, Verna Myers, said: "Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." Inclusion isn't a natural consequence of diversity. You can have a diverse team of talent, but that doesn't mean they feel welcomed or valued or are given opportunities to grow.

Equity

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Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that we don't all start from the same place because advantages and barriers exist. It's a process that acknowledges uneven starting places and seeks to correct the imbalance. Diversity and inclusion are both outcomes. Equity is not. It refers to the process an organization engages in to ensure that people with marginalized identities have the opportunity to grow, contribute, and develop .

4. Why is a diversity, inclusion, and equity policy important for nonprofits?

We should preface this template by saying: it's not enough to just have a policy in place to "cover your bases." You need to actually use it and strive to do better. Taking a stand by putting a policy in place is not enough. You need to build the core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into your organization's operations and model those values to advance your mission. This is not a solution to the problem, but rather a starting point for your organization.

Here's why it's important to create and implement a policy and conduct these conversations at your organization.

Outside of the obvious moral imperative of equity, research shows that diversity in the workplace can boost the quality of decision-making and encourage people to be "[more creative, more diligent, and harder-working.](#)" According to the National Council of Nonprofits, a more diverse staff can foster enhanced innovation. "When board members, employees, and others who shape the values and activities of a nonprofit come from a wide array of backgrounds, they each bring unique perspectives that shape, blend, and influence how to advance the nonprofit's mission and solve problems in potentially more innovative ways."

Read this blog post by Kishshana Palmer, CFRE to learn more about [why nonprofits struggle with diversity.](#)

5. Who should have a seat at the table when a policy is created?

There's no right or wrong answer to this question and every nonprofit will be different. These conversations should be organization-wide though; starting with the board and leadership, all the way down to employees and maybe even volunteers (depending on your organization).

Here are some suggestions for who should be involved with creating and upholding the plan (everyone should participate in its implementation):

- Your organization's director or CEO should be the visible leader and spokesperson for achieving diversity.
- The board of directors should be involved from the very beginning.
- Create a diversity committee with representation that reflects the diversity of the organization and as many levels of the organizational structure as possible.
- Nominate a "diversity and inclusion" champion or create an award to recognize staff and/or volunteers. This could also be a diversity coordinator role(s) that liaisons between management, the board, and the diversity committee.
- Conduct exercises with all employees to get their input on what diversity, inclusion, and equity mean and use their feedback. Encourage employees to get involved with the committee.
- If it makes sense for your organization, consider hiring a consultant to assist with further planning and implementation.

6. What should you include in your policy?

Again, no right or wrong answer. But at the end of the day, you should only include goals and action items in your plan that you will actually strive to uphold and accomplish. Otherwise your policy is just empty words. Live out your diversity, inclusion, and equity plan in your organizational values.

Here are a few suggestions of points to include in your policy:

- Overarching organizational statement on cultural equity. This would be similar to your mission statement, but focused on inclusion.
- What diversity, inclusion, and equity mean for your organization. You can draw these definitions from exercises with your staff. Their input is valuable.
- Diversity initiative goals your organization wants to hit. These goals ideally wouldn't be hiring a certain number of people that can meet a "diversity quota," but high-level initiatives your organization should meet to foster diversity at your organization. This should be a code to hold leadership accountable.
- Diversity, inclusion, and equity principles, or your organization's action plan. This section is answering the question of how you accomplish your high-level goals at an organizational level. These action points or tactics will help your organization uphold its diversity, inclusion, and equity goals. In this section you'll want to address issues like what language you use in your job descriptions and how you might strive to pursue necessary system changes. Here's what Amy Stapleton, Director of Community Engagement and Development at Building Bridges has to say about the value of making your job postings more inclusive:

"I don't know that EEO statements are altogether that helpful, most people see them for what they are – just a sort of legal checklist type statement. Make your job postings more inclusive, and people will know you really live your statement and values. If you are committed to things like flexibility around formal education, say so. If you're willing to train on the job, say so! If you especially encourage women, non-traditional leaders, people of color, people from traditionally underrepresented

groups, say so outright and people will respond!"

Here are a few other tactics/action items you might consider adding to the action plan portion of your policy:

- Commit your organization to creating a diversity and inclusion network within your organization and community — and even with similar nonprofits in your industry. Partner up with other organizations in your industry to pool resources and expand offerings to underrepresented members for programming, or start an awareness campaign for visibility into sector initiatives or issues.
- Outline any diversity programming your organization currently has or plans to implement.
- As mentioned in section 5, it's a good idea to create a diversity committee to hold your organization accountable for these initiatives.
- If it makes sense, include a place for interested parties to make a donation to help your organization support diversity initiatives internally, and externally in the surrounding community.
- Create a section on your website, or on the diversity and inclusion policy page, that includes curated self-hosted and third-party articles, resources, and research about diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Write and promote a blog post or press release about your organization's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity for itself and sector or industry as a whole.

Side note: you can check out some great disability inclusiveness resources for your plan [here](#).

7. Basic sample policy

[Arts organization] Diversity and Inclusion Statement

At [arts organization] a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace is one where all employees and volunteers, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation or identity, education or disability, feels valued and respected. We are committed to a nondiscriminatory approach and provide equal opportunity for employment and advancement in all of our departments, programs, and worksites. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard.

We're committed to modeling diversity and inclusion for the entire arts industry of the nonprofit sector, and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.

To provide informed, authentic leadership for cultural equity, [arts organization] strives to:

- See diversity, inclusion, and equity as connected to our mission and critical to ensure the well-being of our staff and the arts communities we serve.
- Acknowledge and dismantle any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services, and continually update and report organization progress.
- Explore potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with inclusiveness.
- Advocate for and support board-level thinking about how systemic inequities impact our organization's work, and how best to address that in a way that is consistent with our mission.
- Help to challenge assumptions about what it takes to be a strong leader at our organization, and who is well-positioned to provide leadership.
- Practice and encourage transparent communication in all interactions.
- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our board, staff, committee, and advisory bodies.

- Lead with respect and tolerance. We expect all employees to embrace this notion and to express it in workplace interactions and through everyday practices.

[Arts organization] abides by the following action items to help promote diversity and inclusion in our workplace:

- Pursue cultural competency throughout our organization by creating substantive learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies.
- Generate and aggregate quantitative and qualitative research related to equity to make incremental, measurable progress toward the visibility of our diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts. Once the content is curated it will be added to our website so others can access.
- Improve our cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies that foster leadership that reflects the diversity of American society.
- Pool resources and expand offerings for underrepresented constituents by connecting with other arts organizations committed to diversity and inclusion efforts.
- Develop and present sessions on diversity, inclusion, and equity to provide information and resources internally, and to members, the community, and the arts industry.
- Develop a system for being more intentional and conscious of bias during the hiring, promoting, or evaluating process. Train our hiring team on equitable practices.
- Include a salary range with all public job descriptions.
- Advocate for public and private-sector policy that promotes diversity, inclusion, and equity. Challenge systems and policies that create inequity, oppression and disparity.

8. Upholding the policy

If your organization is committed to creating a policy you need to understand that effort must be put into implementing and upholding it.

Here are some tips on how to do that:

- Include your policy in your hiring, onboarding, and orientation processes for new employees, volunteers, board members, committee members, etc. Posting a salary range with a job description is an easy way to get started. [Here's a post](#) written by Vu Lee, Writer at Nonprofit AF and Executive Director at Rainier Valley Corps, that explains this.

“From my perspective, the statement is just legalese. It’s more important to focus on outreach, eliminate formal education requirement if not necessary, posting the salary range, ensuring you have a diverse hiring panel, and train your hiring team in equitable practices, those are the things that will make a difference.”

- Weave the policy into your organization’s strategic plan.
- Consider implementing a zero tolerance policy for bullying and harassment.
- We can’t stress this enough. Open up a conversation with employees and volunteers about what diversity, inclusion, and equity mean to them. This will help your employees feel heard and included, and their insight will help you judge your policy. Do monthly, quarterly, or annual check-ins with employees to see how they perceive your efforts are faring.
- Make sure your diversity committee is keeping a pulse on tactics and goals and pivoting when necessary.

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