20 DEI BEST PRACTICES

WHO LEADS MINNESOTA?



Minnesota Compass

Since 2019, Wilder Research and the Bush Foundation have partnered on the "Who Leads in Minnesota" project to understand Minnesota's leaders. To inform this work, Wilder Research conducted a literature review in 2021 to better understand which diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and practices in the workplace are effective. Now, five years later, this updated list identifies changes in the field and new policies and practices that have been found to be effective in supporting employees regardless of gender, age, race, or disability status.

Create a culture that supports all employees

1. Establish a workplace culture that ensures all employees are productive and supported, rather than focusing on any one culture.
2. Create a relationship-based culture by rewarding collaboration and teamwork rather than competition.
3. Provide accommodations, flexibility, and support for work-life balance to all employees.
4. Replace discrimination and harassment complaint processes with ombudsman programs or anonymous online complaint reporting systems.

Ensure skilled candidates from a variety of backgrounds apply and are hired

5. Use technology to do blind hiring by redacting applicants' characteristics, names, and addresses from resumes.
6. Hire multiple staff at the same time (cluster hiring) to increase diversity of new hires and reduce tokenism and stigmatization.
7. Take a skills-based approach (rather than degree-based) to hiring by rewriting job descriptions and focusing interview questions on a candidate's skills.
8. Be explicit about your organization's commitment to inclusion and representation in job postings.
9. Proactively recruit in underrepresented communities by advertising open positions in locations that are likely to be seen by members of those communities.

Support employees to be promoted

10. Identify clear pathways for promotion and advancement.
11. Reduce ambiguity in performance reviews and performance-based rewards.
12. Encourage all staff to engage in management training so everyone is set up for the possibility of promotion.

Provide voluntary cultural competence training

13. Avoid mandatory training, which can reinforce stereotypes and be negatively perceived.
14. Offer voluntary and ongoing diversity training that is focused on history, facts, and tangible actions employees can apply to their work.
15. Use validated instruments to measure whether DEI outcomes are achieved through training.

Offer mentoring and employee resource groups to support employees

16. Develop formal mentoring programs that are offered to everyone and match employees based on interests and skills.
17. Create and support employee resource groups for underrepresented staff, including those from different cultural backgrounds, abilities, and ages.
18. Consider reverse mentoring programs where newer employees mentor more experienced employees to support learning new technology and transfer of institutional knowledge.

Voluntary diversity training can take many forms. In our experience, focusing the content of voluntary trainings on history, facts, and tangible actions is the most productive form. Trainings should include education on the causes and effects of systemic racism and other types of discrimination, how to identify and mitigate them in the workplace, and how intentionally inclusive employment practices and workplace behaviors can help to reverse them. (Coffman et al, 2021, p. 23).

Track impact and hold leaders accountable

19. Track metrics like representation, employee satisfaction, and retention rates.
20. Ensure sufficient oversight of diversity efforts by holding leadership, at all levels, accountable.

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