

TOOLKIT

# How to Develop a Strategic Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan



# INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are grappling with a significant social crisis – addressing institutional biases while supporting employees and stakeholders through a committed focus on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Many organizations are beginning to recognize the imperative need to launch DEI initiatives both internally and externally.

ISC2 is committed to providing a diverse, equitable and inclusive cybersecurity profession across the globe. As a key part of that commitment, we have developed this step-by-step guide for organizations to use to begin to achieve lasting and impactful change by developing a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion plan.

Each phase provides the opportunity to examine where the organization is on its DEI journey, develop organization-focused goals and strategies with internal stakeholders, and openly communicate the plan and progress throughout the organization.

Before beginning the planning process, you will need to secure initial buy-in from leadership and ensure resources are committed to both complete and implement the plan. Developing your plan with this support, will ensure you have a successful roadmap for internal growth, help expand access and success for diverse groups, and build a work environment where everyone belongs and is supported, welcomed and valued.



# DEI STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AT-A-GLANCE

## **PHASE ONE: PREPARATION**

In order to begin the strategic planning process, you will need to ensure your organization is prepared to undertake a large scope project. This phase involves conducting an organizational assessment, engaging the right stakeholders, and defining your goals before beginning to write your plan.

## **PHASE TWO: WRITING THE PLAN**

Writing your DEI plan can be an overwhelming process, but getting this part right will help to engage and align stakeholders around your DEI priorities leading to success. The 5 steps outlined in this phase will help to ensure your plan is effective, impactful and comprehensive so that your entire organization can get behind it.

## **PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENTATION & TRACKING**

After your plan is complete and you have started to implement your strategies, it is important to track and measure your progress. This part of the process can often get lost with all of the DEI activities being implemented, but it is an equally important phase to ensure your DEI journey remains successful and evolves.



# PHASE ONE: PREPARATION

Steps 1 through 5 provide a basic outline for preparing to undertake your strategic planning process. As every organization is different, this outline can be customized to fit your specific needs and culture to ensure your DEI plan is reflective of your unique DEI vision.

“ Start where you are...”

— Arthur Ashe

## STEP 1: ASSESS WHERE YOU ARE

- » Start by collecting both internal and external data to gain a 360 degree perspective of your current state.
- » Internal data should include analyses of internal culture, attitudes and systems. Employment data, affirmative action plans, EEO reporting and internal surveys are great sources. Organizational assessments are also a good way to gauge cultural competency.
- » For your external data, organizations also need to know how they compare to other industry organizations. Labor market data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics will help you understand industry and workforce demographics.
- » Along with the internal and external data, you can identify key areas of concern and needs to define goals and strategies. Be sure to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data to get a clear sense of the numbers and narratives of stakeholders.

## STEP 2: DEFINE THE BUSINESS CASE

- » It is imperative to get leaders on board. This requires the ability to translate the benefits of DEI into a program leaders want to fund.
- » This is where developing your organization’s business case for diversity is vital. The business case includes highlighting the business value, humanity, and equality-based benefits to transformative change.
- » Be sure to include how a DEI initiative will foster innovation, increase financial performance and growth, and increase employee performance, engagement, and productivity.

### STEP 3: ENGAGE THE RIGHT STAKEHOLDERS

- » Make sure you have the right people in the room to make an impact, including both leaders and diverse staff from various levels within the organization.
- » Invite decision-makers who can approve activities and resources. Influencers whom decision-makers listen to and know the organization's pulse should also be included.
- » Do not forget the skeptics. Although they may not buy in initially, their perspectives and your ability to sway their reservations will help to bolster transformation.

### STEP 4: IDENTIFY YOUR "WHY" & GOALS

- » Ask, "Why do we need diversity within our organization now?" before and throughout the planning process to keep your efforts grounded and focused. And, be sure to tie the "why" to your core mission, values, and priorities; making it part of your organization's DNA.
- » DEI initiatives and activities are plentiful so identifying SMART goals aligned to the needs identified in Step 1 is key. Set goals that show early wins to help increase buy-in quickly. Include goals that look beyond quotas and show a commitment to changes in internal culture and systemic biases.

#### SMART DEI Goal Example:

By 2022, implement a new recruitment system and process using clearly defined criteria, guidelines, and outreach methods targeted specifically to diverse candidates to increase diverse new hires from 10% to 30%

### STEP 5: GARNER BROADER FEEDBACK

Once you have drafted your SMART goals, the next step is to make sure they are collaborative by garnering broader feedback from those outside of your DEI-focused group.

- » Get input from people in various organizational levels who are going to be the most impacted. This is a good start to inclusiveness and also ensures all voices are heard and valued. Their feedback will be eye-opening and help to inform goals or clarify what you should prioritize.

#### RESOURCES

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/>

# PHASE TWO: WRITING THE PLAN

After you have prepared to write your plan, you are ready to move into the writing phase. This phase will take some time (usually more than you're anticipating), but it is worth patiently following the process.

## STEP 1: GET COLLABORATIVE

- » With your data collection and defined goals, engage your DEI workgroup to write your plan. Involve them throughout the entire process.
- » Remember that writing the plan requires time and focus. It is a good idea to schedule time away either in a retreat or several blocked work sessions to complete and review the plan.
- » Identify a skilled facilitator to walk your workgroup through the brainstorming process to keep you moving forward.
- » Dividing the workgroup up into teams that can focus on different sections, such as developing strategies for each goal will also be helpful.

## STEP 2: IDENTIFY HOW YOU'LL REACH YOUR GOALS

- » Brainstorm how you will reach your goals with your workgroup. This includes defining your DEI vision, mission and strategies.
- » Develop clear vision and mission statements tied to your ideal future state and the overall DEI goal to ensure your initiative remains grounded as strategies evolve. Your statements should differ from your organization's vision and mission, but they should be connected.
- » You will want to have your research handy to inform these brainstorming sessions, particularly when developing strategies. As the workgroup outlines strategies, take the time to align them to each goal identified in Phase One.

Here are a few key pointers:

- » Keep the number of strategies short: Eight strategies or less will help reduce stalled efforts.
- » Consensus is not the goal: Everyone won't agree on each strategy. Be sure to discuss dependencies and note how you will pivot if needed.
- » Get leadership buy-in: Present your strategies to leadership and stakeholders to gain feedback before moving on to the next step—Outline Your Action Items.

### STEP 3: OUTLINE YOUR ACTION ITEMS

- » With your strategies developed, list key action items and align them to each strategy. Successful plans require a focus on the details to ensure you are making progress and this is where those details get outlined.
- » Include the following elements for each action item:
  - » Timing (start and end dates)
  - » Resources/Budget
  - » Responsible Party
  - » Priority (high, medium, or low)
  - » Metrics
- » Action items with these elements are the implementation part of your plan and will evolve. Enhancing, adding, or eliminating parts are normal and necessary for effective transformation.
- » Follow the plan daily to track progress and ensure your activities are aligned.

### STEP 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Your organization's full DEI plan should include the following components.

- » Executive Summary: Write this last to capture key insights from the entire process.
- » Background/Introduction: Include your research highlights, why you are embarking on a DEI initiative, a description of your planning process, and the key stakeholders involved here.
- » DEI Vision and Mission
- » Goals
- » Strategies
- » Action Items
- » Appendices: Add any research, a glossary of terms, and other pertinent information here for those not involved in the process to review.



## STEP 5: COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN

One of the most imperative keys to any DEI plan is communicating both the launch of your initiative and the ongoing progress of your plan.

- » Frequent transparency and honesty ensure follow-through on promises made while building an inclusive environment.
- » Any communications should evoke the commitment of leadership to achieving the goals and positive change but it should not be one-way. Garner and communicate stakeholders' experiences to ensure you are as open as possible about progress and bumps in the road.
- » Integrate key messages and progress into already established communications methods, but enlist the help of an experienced multicultural or diversity communications professional to curb misunderstandings.

### RESOURCES

How to Write a Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

<https://www.uschamber.com/co/start/strategy/writing-diversity-and-inclusion-statement>



# PHASE THREE: IMPLEMENTATION & TRACKING

**“ You can’t manage what  
you don’t measure. ”**

— Peter Drucker

## STEP 1: DETERMINE YOUR TRACKING CADENCE

- » Before implementing the plan, determine when you will track and report on your progress. Continuous monitoring is key to any successful strategic plan as there will be setbacks and pivots throughout the implementation.
- » Identify who will be responsible for tracking and set a schedule for when you will report results regularly to leadership, internally and to stakeholders.
- » Monthly or quarterly is a good place to start, but remember to be flexible. You may need to meet more frequently when hot buttons arise or to push through a more difficult phase of the plan.

## STEP 2: FIND YOUR TRACKING TOOL

- » Determine how you will track your metrics. Project tracking can be done with a spreadsheet, but as your strategies and action items get more complex this method can become overwhelming.
- » Invest in a strategic plan tracking system to help keep you on track without spending too much time entering data or interpreting results for those outside of your workgroup.
- » Most tracking software includes a dashboard, task management, charts, and dependency features so you can quickly see where you are with one click. You will easily be able to print out reports, see where resources are needed, and track tasks and responsibilities.

## STEP 3: REVIEW ON PURPOSE

- » Tracking and holding review sessions with your workgroup and leadership should not just be used to see what has been accomplished. This is also a good time to improve on purpose.
- » Improving on purpose includes conducting honest, open, and fresh reviews of your goals, strategies, and timeframes to ensure they are still aligned with where you are at that time.
- » Engage stakeholders and your workgroup during review sessions by asking probing questions:
  - » Does this strategy still work?
  - » How could we do this more effectively?
  - » Who needs to be involved that hasn't been included?
  - » What's happening in our environment now and how does this affect our activities?
- » As the world and social attitudes change, your organization may need to shift to meet the moment. A good environmental scan will help to realign or identify areas that may need to change.
- » Listen to those outside of leadership and your workgroup through interviews and anonymous communications methods to help you stay abreast of sensitive issues that may have a significant bearing on strategy.

## CONCLUSION

Diversity, equity and inclusion is about listening, actively engaging others, and doing the hard work for long-term success. There is no better time than now to start or enhance your DEI journey. With the steps outlined above, you will be well-prepared to start developing your plan and progress toward a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization.

## RESOURCES

HBR: Moving Beyond Diversity Toward Racial Equity

<https://hbr.org/2020/06/moving-beyond-diversity-toward-racial-equity>