

DEI Glossary

In today's diverse and multicultural world, creating an inclusive and equitable environment is essential for the growth and success of any organization. Understanding the language of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is the first step in this journey.

This glossary would serve as a comprehensive resource to understand key terms and concepts. This document would be updated periodically to stay relevant in the evolving DEI world.

By familiarizing yourself with these definitions, you will be better equipped to engage in DEI discussions, have meaningful conversations, challenge biases, and contribute to creating a culture where everyone feels valued and respected.

Let's start with the most common acronym DEI and then move ahead in alphabetical order –

Diversity – This includes all the way people differ from each other based on factors like race, ethnicity, culture, age, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. It also includes differences in education, personalities, skill sets, experiences, knowledge, ideas and values.

Equity – It means everyone will get an equal and fair access to support, resources and opportunities as per their individual needs and circumstances. *Equity is different from Equality.*

Inclusion - Creating a supportive and respectful culture where people can contribute actively, and differences are embraced.

The **DEI** concept has further evolved to **DEI(B)(A)** which now includes “**Belonging**” and “**Accessibility**” as important aspects to be taken into consideration.

Belonging – The feeling of being accepted and included within a group or organization.

Accessibility – Ensuring individuals with disabilities can easily access physical spaces, technology, policies, systems, products, or services just like other individuals. This includes making intentional changes for accommodations such as ramps and elevators in buildings, screen readers and voice recognition software for digital content, and inclusive policies that promote equal participation and opportunities. Accessibility aims to remove barriers and provide fair experiences for everyone.

A

Ageism – Discrimination against individuals based on their age.

Accommodation - Temporary adjustments or modifications provided to individuals with disabilities to enable them to participate fully in an activity, environment, or system.

B

Bystander - A bystander is someone who witnesses acts of discrimination, harassment or bullying, but does not take action to intervene or support the victim.

Bias (Prejudice) – Preconceived opinions/feeling/notions, usually negative, directed towards people of a particular group.

BIPOC – An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (POC).

C

Culture – The shared values, beliefs, behaviors, customs, and artifacts that characterize a group of people.

Cultural Competence - The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across different cultures.

Class - Refers to a system that defines people's socio-economic status based on factors such as wealth, occupation, education, income etc.

D

Disability - Physical or mental impairment that affects a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Discrimination – The unfair treatment given to individuals or groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, intellectual or mental abilities.

E

Equality - Treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities.

Ethnicity - A category of people who identify with each other based on shared cultural, language, or ancestral heritage.

H

Harassment – Unwanted behaviour (such as use of comments or actions) that are offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning and results in a hostile work environment.

I

Intersectionality - A way of understanding how different parts of a person's identity like their race, gender, age, or class, come together to create unique experiences and challenges. For example, a black woman might face different issues than a white woman or a black man because of the combined impact of her race and gender.

Inclusive Language - Intentionally using words and expressions that acknowledges diversity, includes different kind of people, conveys respect, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

Indigenous – Refers to the original inhabitants of a region or country in contrast to the groups that have settled, occupied, or inhabited the area more recently. In the United States, this can refer to groups traditionally termed Native Americans (American Indians), Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

L

LGBTQIA+ - An acronym that stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual and more. These terms describe an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity. The plus (+) signifies the expanding spectrum of the diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

M

Marginalization - When a person or group is dominated and treated as insignificant or without power, often resulting in their exclusion from social, economic, or political opportunities.

Minority Group – Groups who are differentiated from the majority of the population due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, or cultural practices. These groups often have less power, representation, or access to resources compared to the dominant groups of the society.

Microaggression - Everyday verbal or non-verbal (subtle yet insensitive) actions, remarks, statements, directed towards a underrepresented person or a group like people of color, women or LGBTQIA+ community.

N

Neurodiversity - An umbrella term used to describe wide range of mental orientations inside a human brain. It relates to differences in the way we think, process, learn and behave. Examples of neurodiverse identities include - Autism, ADHD, ADD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, sensory-processing sensitivity, Tourette's Syndrome and more.

P

People of color - A term used to refer to individuals who do not identify as white in terms of race or ethnicity. People of color include a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including but not limited to Black, Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, and Middle Eastern individuals, among others.

Privilege - Unearned advantages, benefits, or opportunities that individuals or groups enjoy solely based on their association with a particular social group, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Examples include access to better education, employment opportunities, safety, and societal acceptance.

R

Race - A social construct that divides people into different groups based on factors such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), family heritage, culture, cultural history, ethnicity.

Racism - Discrimination or prejudice against certain races in a society because of the belief system that one race is superior to the another.

S

Safe Space - Refers to an environment in which an individual feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience (i.e., a judgment-free zone).

Stereotype - A form of generalization about a particular group of people that is based on false beliefs and assumptions, which can lead to biased attitudes and unfair treatment. Stereotypes are typically negative and based on insufficient information.

T

Tokenism - Refers to the practice of making a superficial or artificial effort to include members of underrepresented groups, just to show your involvement in diversity initiatives without genuinely addressing inequalities. Such as recruiting a small number of people from these groups to meet quotas or to appear inclusive, while not providing them with real opportunities for meaningful participation or career advancement.

U

Underrepresented Groups – Groups who historically have not had equal access to economic opportunities because of discrimination or other societal barriers such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual-orientation, disability or low-income status. Examples can include - women or women of color not being included in fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), because traditionally they have been dominated by men, especially white men.

V

Veteran Status – Whether or not an individual has served in a nation's armed forces (or other uniformed services) like military, naval, or air services.

W

White Privilege – Societal advantages, benefits and opportunities that favor white people over non-white people in various aspects of life, such as greater access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and legal protection.

White Supremacy – Refers to the ideology that white people are superior to people of other races and therefore should dominate society. This belief system influences the ideas, attitudes, and actions of white individuals towards non-white people, often leading to racism, discrimination, and violence against people of color.