

Creating a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Organization

Thoughtful and informed diversity, equity, and inclusion programs have been shown to increase membership in an organization, create new opportunities for members, and appeal to emerging markets. DEI efforts enable associations to be more competitive in delivering relevant resources for its members to help them serve the rapidly evolving consumer landscape and social climate.

What is DEI?

• Diversity

- o Diversity is the representation of differences across race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, language, disability, age, and political perspectives.

• Equity

- o Equity is the fairness within the procedures of governance, access to resources and opportunities provided by the association, and addressing the root causes of disparate outcomes.

• Inclusion

- o Inclusion is ensuring that those who are diverse feel and are welcomed to the degree where they can fully participate in the decision-making and development opportunities with the association.

Why DEI

Many successful organizations implement DEI initiatives as a source of competitive advantage. For others, it is a matter of justice and social responsibility. For all, it is essential to sustainable growth strategies and value creation. DEI measures can be examined internally and externally.

• Internal

- o Decades of research on DEI shows an un-

deniable correlation between diversity of teams and level of performance, creativity, resiliency, and progress. Teams in this context, is used broadly to include internal association staff, volunteer committees, and the association's leadership. Prioritizing the diversity of your internal decision-makers and thought leaders will lead to more innovation and long-term member value.

• External

- o Not only are REALTOR® members becoming more diverse, but so are their clients and the communities they serve. Organizations are realizing that consumer demand for corporate allyship is gaining momentum, and a lack of responsiveness can lead to the loss of relevance and competitiveness in the industry. Research also shows that millennials and Generation Zs place greater emphasis on societal issues and social justice. Millennials and Gen Zs have entered the real estate market and are anticipated to outpace their preceding generations in diversity and transaction potential. Members are already facing challenges of shifting consumer demands and emerging technologies that require them to adapt. Failing to enhance the REALTOR® brand among diverse consumers will directly affect members' future business opportunities.
- o The same can be said for attracting new REALTOR® members and the next generation of association leadership. Associations that do not commit to DEI will find it difficult to recruit new members and face long-term sustainability challenges.

How to Start: A Step-by-Step Guide to DEI

Diversity is the goal. Inclusion and equity are the tools needed to reach that goal.

Step 1: Inclusion. Conduct an internal audit of how the association is cultivating a culture of inclusion:

- Are your events and communications representing diversity in thought, audiences, interests, and backgrounds?
- Do your committee and leadership demographics reflect the market and your membership?

Example: Collin County's Census Outreach (<https://www.ccar.net/census/>)

The Collin County Association of REALTORS® took an active role in ensuring complete census counts in 2020. CCAR realized that the board's jurisdiction covered diverse populations and that expressing the importance of the census would need to have an inclusive reach. In response, CCAR mobilized its global and diversity committee members to produce videos promoting census participation in 26 different languages. Languages included Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Portuguese, and American Sign Language.

Step 2: Equity. The audit in Step 1 may uncover processes and procedures that are not achieving diversity. Step 2 focuses on modifying those processes and procedures to create equitable outcomes.

- If committee leadership is mostly homogeneous, is there unconscious bias behind the selection process? Are there changes to the selection process that would reduce bias?

- If your events are attracting the same group of participants, are association activities presented and held in a manner that makes everyone feel welcomed to attend and participate?

Example: Austin's Diversity Report (<http://www.abor.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Diversity-Report.pdf>)

The Austin Board of REALTORS® reviewed its current membership composition, opportunities for leadership advancement, and historical demographics of past leadership and volunteer members. The 2019 findings revealed that the diversity of ABOR's Board of Directors for the past ten years is not reflective of its membership at large nor the greater Austin community. In response, ABOR outlined short-term and long-term strategies to increase diversity at the association, including annual DEI training for new and existing board members and encouraging staff certification in DEI.

Step 3: Diversity. Fix equity issues discovered in Step 2 and foster an environment of continued learning to maintain diversity in association practices and governance.

- Are association staff and leadership knowledgeable enough on DEI topics to measure progress and set future benchmarks?
- If you have a DEI member committee or advisory group, are those members supported in their efforts to make real change?

Example: McAllen's Formation of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee

The Greater McAllen Association of REAL-

"We need to engage that diversity. It has to happen, because if we don't, we will become less and less effective as a voice for real estate in our communities."

-Fred Underwood,

*Director of Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion
for the National Association of REALTORS®*

TORS® executive leadership recognized a need to better reflect the community that the association serves. Responding immediately, the Nominating Committee acted to reduce bias from its selection process. The Board of Directors further decided to create a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council to encourage more examination and safe discussions focused on DEI practices in association activities. The board also agreed to consider an amendment to the association bylaws, which would formally establish a Diversity and Inclusion Committee at GMAR.

Step 4: Repeat. Successful DEI initiatives are organization-wide and constantly reexamined. Competitive associations and leaders are dedicated to improving existing shortcomings and focusing future progress through a DEI lens. They act despite fears of getting it wrong, receiving negative member reactions, or having uncomfortable conversations.



For more resources, visit texasrealestate.com/inclusion.

