VIRGINIA CENTER FOR
INCLUSIVE
COMMUNITIES

VIRGINIA INCLUSION SUMMIT 2024
LEARNING LAB – BUILDING TRUST IN WORKPLACES
CASE STUDIES

Scenario 1: In the wake of a highly publicized and contentious national news event, tensions within a diverse project team at Innovate Tech have escalated. Alex, a project manager, notices a significant drop in collaboration and an increase in misunderstandings and conflicts among team members. The event has stirred strong political and social opinions, causing discomfort and mistrust, particularly among team members from different cultural and political backgrounds. Alex, concerned about the declining team dynamics and the potential impact on project deadlines, asks for your advice on how to restore trust and promote a more inclusive and supportive team environment.

Scenario 2: At ABC123 State Agency, the senior leadership team's push to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into their operations has led to a divide among employees. Following a comprehensive all-staff Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training, concerns have heightened about the potential biases that could be embedded in AI systems by developers, reflecting systemic prejudices. Some employees worry that these biases could skew data-driven decisions, affecting everything from hiring practices to marketing strategies, thereby reinforcing existing inequities. Meanwhile, a segment of the workforce, particularly in the operations and product development teams, is eager to adopt AI to enhance efficiency and secure a competitive edge in the industry.

Scenario 3: At Spectrum Solutions, a well-established consulting firm, you are the manager of one of the teams with the most age diversity. Tensions have arisen due to perceived generational biases. Employees have expressed concerns that management favors younger employees in technology-related discussions and disagreements, reinforcing stereotypes of their tech proficiency. Conversely, employees have expressed concerns that older employees are preferred when it comes to debates on changing organizational policies, due to their longer tenure and experience. This has led to a growing sense of division and mistrust between the generations, with each group feeling marginalized in different contexts.

Scenario 4: At your organization, the sudden dissolution of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team has sparked widespread concern and skepticism among employees. Your company's leadership asserts a continued commitment to "diversity and inclusion," promising to integrate these principles more deeply into all business operations rather than isolating them within a single team. However, this change has left many employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups, feeling uncertain and mistrustful about the organization's true dedication to DEI values. Rumors and discontent spread as staff seek clarity and assurance that diversity and inclusion will remain a priority.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the issue and your immediate, gut-level reaction?

- How does your identity (e.g., social identity, job role, etc.) inform if or how you respond?

- What action(s) might you take in the moment? What long term action(s) might you take?

- What tools exist at your organization to address this issue?