

2025 VIRGINIA INCLUSION SUMMIT 2025

LEARNING LAB – MAKING THE CASE FOR INCLUSION

Station 1: IED Strategy (Inclusion, Equity, Diversity)

How does your organization define its purpose and vision for inclusion?

What strategies have helped align inclusion goals with your organization's mission?

What metrics or indicators have you seen used effectively to track progress?

- Reviewing trends and implementing changes as consistent strategy
- Purposeful with language, defining the language clearly
- Paying attention to how we use our language
- Management training requirements (to take and to train)
- Board Commitment
- ERGs, BRGs
- Partner with inclusive organizations
- Ask employees how they want DEI reflected
- Make sure IED policies and work are transparent to public/community/constituents
- Employee experience sub-committee surveys
- "Inclusivity Index"
- Exit interviews
- Engagement questions on inclusivity
- Inclusive excellence framework
- Purpose: mission-driven kindness and respect
- Strategic compass
- DEI audits to inform strategic plan
- Engagement and inclusion committees and councils; executive engagement and inclusion committees

Station 2: Leadership Commitment

What does visible leadership commitment to inclusion look like in your workplace?

How can leaders be held accountable for advancing inclusion?

What are some ways leaders can act as champions for inclusion beyond statements or policies?

- Board commitment
- Senior leaders and executives serve on Diversity Council or ERGs
- Understanding difficult/expansive definitions of inclusion
- Hiring practices
- Modeling inclusive language
- Supporting diversity of our employees
- Action in the moment by leaders
- Leadership think tank engagement survey
- Actions over words, sharing examples of values in action
- Accountability in leader performance reviews
 - Provide feedback and integrate employee feedback into evaluations
- Board commitment and active support
- Leader visibility



- Executive model and expect respectful behaviors
- Consistent reporting to community
- Provide training
- Representation on staff board, intentional diversity of board
- Make sure Board practices inclusion
 - Board self-evaluation
- Being inclusive of lived and learned experiences
- Consistency and common goals

Station 3: Recruitment and hiring of Diverse Talent

What inclusive hiring practices have you seen or used that work well?

How can organizations reduce bias in the recruitment and interview process?

What inclusive practices can help expand access and opportunity for underrepresented candidates in your hiring process?

- Remove all identifying markers from application materials
- Clear expectations for search committee
- Multiple training/hiring teams
- Job descriptions – be clear about what you really need. Reduce unnecessary barriers
- Train interviewers
- Recruiting at diverse organizations with fair, mutually beneficial intentions
- Offer training programs to expand access
 - For supervising opportunities
 - Internal applicants have access to grow
 - Internal mobility training
- Equity advocates on all search committees to highlight areas of bias
- Diverse search committees (not just race)
- Standardized and unbiased interview questions
- DEI literacy in hiring
- Sourcing
- Provide interview questions for 15 minutes before
- Partner and provide job opportunities for individuals with job coaches/cognitive disabilities
- Utilize interview panels with individuals across the company

Station 4: Inclusive Performance Management

How can performance evaluations be made more inclusive?

What systems or tools help reduce bias in performance reviews?

How can managers be trained to support inclusive feedback and goal-setting?

- Consistency in evaluation standards
- Evaluate self and evaluate leadership
- Transparency in evaluation standards
- Evaluators should know who they are evaluating
- Management courses on diverse topics (i.e. mental health)
- Shared resource/HR support for small businesses to broaden network

- Clear expectations and responsibilities (job description, advancement plan, etc.)
- Incorporating AI with caution and consent
- Open communication before evaluation occurs
- Train supervisors in evaluation process and how to manage
- Examine evaluations for bias
- Focus on outcomes rather than process
- Follow policies rather than unspoken rules
- Examine implicit biases – name and train
- Focus on areas for growth
- Use toolkits from SHRM, SUPRA, etc.

Station 5: Equitable and Inclusive Organizational Structure

What values or behaviors help create a culture of inclusion in your workplace?

How do you build trust and transparency across teams or departments?

What kinds of learning opportunities have helped shift culture toward inclusion?

- Constructive dialogue institutionally
- Being willing to talk about survey results → bringing people into development
- Lunch and learns → bring in external experts
- People-centered workplace – choose well-being
- Vulnerability and being forthcoming, create safety
- Not tying surveys to performance
- Time and consistency
- “Leadership at all levels” – builds transparency and trust
- Respecting lived experiences
- Data collections and reporting (with caution)
- Sharing history of the organization and culture shifts
- Promoting workforce that resembles your community
- Leadership modeling, be present
- Consistent check-ins and intentional leadership
- Civility training
- Ouch & oops – name things early
- Provide multiple avenues for feedback
- Cross-collaboration between teams
- Have crucial conversations in real time
- Prioritize self-care

Station 6: Marketplace and Community

How can organizations build meaningful inclusive partnerships within varying communities?

What are some ways to ensure supplier diversity or community investment?

How can your organization’s external impact reflect its internal inclusion values?

- Volunteer hours, group activities
- Internships, apprenticeships
- Audit current suppliers; research region
- Really listen to community feedback and needs



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- Follow-through and organization accountability – feedback loop
- Family counsels
- Pipeline for continued and ongoing professional development for community experts
- Attempt to minimize power differentials between organizations
- “SWaM” vendors with reciprocity
- Data transparency
- Targeted outreach/recruitment
- Hosting townhalls and asking questions to communities served, information sessions
- Service projects—varying areas of impact
- Publicizing strategic plan and asking for help from partners
- Targeted committees to grow impact areas
 - Having specific engagement goals