



ADVANCED DEIA TOOLKIT

A Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and
Accessibility Guide for Employers

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Achēv's Paving the Way for Immigrant and Racialized Women project is funded through Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada Women's Program. This 21-month initiative aims to achieve systemic change by advancing women's economic security and prosperity.

The project addresses barriers to entry, retention, and success in the workplace faced by immigrant and racialized women. It does so by engaging with employer organizations to implement Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) practices and principles and support them in diversifying their workforce, fostering innovation and engagement, and creating equitable opportunities for all.

Organizations receive fully funded training and support, direct engagement with immigrant and racialized professionals with Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) lens that recognizes diverse experience and systemic barriers.

Training sessions are delivered by DEIA specialists and implemented across four phases:

1. DEIA Awareness Training
2. DEIA Audit and Organizational Action Plan
3. Psychological Safety and Inclusive Workplaces
4. Embedding a DEIA Lens in Everyday Practices

Prior to each training session, participating organizations share their specific training needs and complete an assessment of their existing DEIA framework to identify gaps and inequities. Based on this input, each session is customized in both content and duration to align with organizational priorities and time availability.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help organizations of all sizes strengthen their DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) practices across key operational areas. It includes ten (10) standalone job aids. Each job aid follows the same structure: it introduces the topic, explains why embedding DEIA matters, and provides practical tips tailored for both small to medium-sized organizations and medium to large-sized organizations. Users can reference certain job aids that cater to their current needs, not needing to navigate the toolkit in any specific order.

Every job aid includes “what you need” lists, tips for implementation and additional resources. While some recommendations may be positioned for larger organizations, employers at any scale are encouraged to adapt and use any strategies that feel relevant to their context. For example, when looking at what is needed for medium to large organizations, consider what is also recommended for smaller organizations and check if those elements are applicable to your organization. Whether you are starting small or planning organization-wide change, this toolkit is meant to be flexible, practical, and easy to integrate into your existing processes and daily work.

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JOB AID #1. GOVERNANCE



GOVERNANCE & DEIA

Governance includes the practices and systems that set the overall goals of an organization in motion, through components such as its business plan, leadership and management team, and organizational structure.¹

All organizations can integrate the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in their governance. For example, it is important for organizations to create a **DEIA Statement** that demonstrates their general commitment, illustrating how DEIA fulfills what is outlined in their existing business plan.² They should also consider creating a **DEIA Strategy** that identifies the organization's main priorities in relation to DEIA and tangible actions to meet those objectives.³

For any DEIA initiative to be successfully and sustainably integrated into governance, the management and leadership team must have buy-in from their staff and their own team.⁴ Having leadership buy-in is also key to advancing DEIA in governance. Leaders can demonstrate their commitment by integrating DEIA into the organization's system and structure, including policies and procedures.⁵



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO GOVERNANCE

Incorporating DEIA into governance holds the entire organization accountable. The successful integration of DEIA in a governance framework can look like:

- **Leaders engaging with staff in equitable and inclusive ways that mitigate bias** as they make announcements, conduct performance reviews, assign tasks, offer promotions, and guide team meetings.⁶
- **Leaders exercising their manager rights while being mindful of the barriers that employees encounter and their needs**, including members of equity-deserving groups such as immigrant and racialized women.⁷
- **Organizations achieving meaningful, DEIA-informed transformation**, by formalizing their commitment to the principles from the top down and framing their success based on how they have adhered to DEIA.⁸



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO GOVERNANCE

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Business plan outlining the organization's purpose, mission, and vision.
- Professional development opportunities for staff, including leaders.
- Clear organization structure, including its layout of roles, teams, and communication systems.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Gather perspectives from staff and leadership to inform the DEIA Statement and DEIA Strategy, including employees of equity-deserving groups, using strategies such as surveys and focus groups.⁹

2

Create a **DEIA Statement** connected to the organization's business plan.¹⁰

3

Create a **DEIA Strategy** that outlines the organization's DEIA-based goals and actions to achieve each.¹¹

4

Provide **training and user-friendly informational resources** to all staff, including employees and leaders, on DEIA-related topics and how to apply it in the workplace.¹²

5

Ensure employees' **access and consistent exposure** to the DEIA Statement and/or DEIA Strategy, holding staff and especially leaders accountable. For example, reference the commitments in team meetings, display them on posters in the workplace, or upload them to the organization's intranet site.



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO GOVERNANCE

Medium to Large-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Business plan outlining the organization's purpose, mission and vision.
- Professional development opportunities for staff, including leaders and/or managers.
- Model of the organization's structure, including its policies and administrative layout of roles, teams, departments and/or site operations.
- System of communication for implementing organization-wide changes and policy across teams and/or departments.

Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Gather perspectives from staff, leadership, and other key interest holders to inform the DEIA Statement and DEIA Strategy, including employees of equity-deserving groups.¹³
- 2 Create a **DEIA Statement** connected to the organization's business plan.¹⁴
- 3 Create a **DEIA Strategy** that outlines main priorities, outcomes or milestones, and actions for adhering to DEIA.¹⁵
- 4 Provide **training and user-friendly informational resources** to staff on DEIA and how to apply it in the workplace.¹⁶ For large organizations, provide **department-specific resources** with DEIA-focused tips related to the specific work of employees in different fields.
- 5 Ensure **accountability and feedback** on progress related to the DEIA Strategy through an equitable reporting structure.¹⁷

Additional Resources

- CCDI. (2024, January). **Creating a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy: Toolkit for developing a strategy to enhance DEI in your organization.**
- Washington, E. (2022, November-December). **The Five Stages of DEI Maturity. Harvard Business Review.**



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1. Canadian Audit & Accountability Foundation, 2024
2. Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion [CCDI], 2024
3. Ibid.
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JOB AID #2. HUMAN RESOURCES



HUMAN RESOURCES & DEIA

Human resources (HR) oversee employment-related aspects in an organization such as workforce representation, recruitment and hiring, retention and promotion, advising staff on workplace-related topics, and professional development.¹

Integrating the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) principles in HR practices ensures that employees and job applicants are treated in consistent, equitable and inclusive ways. For example, **workforce representation** describes the degree to which employees proportionally reflect the demographic characteristics of their clientele.² A **representative workforce** includes equity-deserving groups such as persons with disabilities, Indigenous individuals, women, and racialized individuals.³ It is important to have representation at all levels of the workforce, including entry-level, staff, and leadership roles. Applying DEIA to **recruitment and hiring** is key for workforce representation, as these can privilege or exclude certain groups.⁴ For example, recruiters' subjective or cultural views on merit and candidates' behaviours can affect selection choices.⁵

Inclusive **retention and promotion practices** such as mentoring opportunities for all staff also support representativeness.⁶ HR can implement DEIA while advising employees by cultivating safe spaces for communication and mitigating personal assumptions or biases related to certain groups.⁷ In regards to professional development, HR can organize training for staff that increase knowledge of DEIA-related topics such as how to apply DEIA principles in the workplace.⁸



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO HR

Effectively incorporating DEIA in HR practices such as workforce representation can result in:

- A **representative workforce** founded on equitable recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion strategies that are mindful of bias.⁹
- **Increased sense of belonging among employees**, especially members of equity-deserving groups such as immigrant and racialized women.¹⁰
- **Greater innovation and creativity to serve populations and communities**, as diverse staff provide insights related to their different backgrounds and experiences.¹¹



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO HUMAN RESOURCES

Small to Medium-sized Organizations



What you need:

- HR Manager and/or Team with some knowledge and capacity of DEIA.
- Culture of trust among staff to collect feedback.
- Recruitment and hiring processes.
- Promotion and retention processes.
- Communication system on workplace policies or concerns.
- Professional development capacity.

Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Gather **employee feedback** on the organization's recruitment and hiring processes, including participants of equity-deserving groups, using approaches such as online surveys.¹²

2

Establish **standardized hiring and promotion processes** that are fair, inclusive, and transparent. This includes selection criteria before starting the competition and providing reasonable accommodations to applicants.¹³

3

Collect **workforce demographic data** from staff through a self-identification survey.¹⁴

4

Consider **hiring and promotion targets** for underrepresented groups in the organization.¹⁵

5

Provide **training and user-friendly resources** on the **benefits** of workforce representation and diversity to challenge misconceptions.¹⁶

6

Create **conflict resolution processes** to address reported issues, including incidents of workplace discrimination and harassment.



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO HUMAN RESOURCES

Medium to Large-sized Organizations

What you need:

- HR Manager and/or Team with knowledge and capacity of DEIA.
- Culture of trust among staff to collect feedback.



Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Gather **employee feedback** on the organization's recruitment and hiring processes, including participants of equity-deserving groups, using approaches such as online surveys or focus groups.¹⁷
- 2 Establish **standardized hiring and promotion processes** that are fair, inclusive, and transparent. This includes selection criteria before starting the competition and providing reasonable accommodations to applicants.¹⁷
- 3 Supply a **toolkit** for hiring committees of equitable best practices such as the [Paving the Way: DEIA Toolkit for Employers](#).¹⁸
- 4 Collect **workforce demographic data** from staff through a self-identification survey.¹⁹
- 5 Set **hiring and promotion targets** for underrepresented groups in the organization based on labour market availability with specific timelines.²⁰
- 6 Regularly monitor **rates of hiring, retention, promotion, and turnover**, accounting for the demographic characteristics of affected staff, using your organizational HR analytics.²¹
- 7 Provide **training and user-friendly resources** on how to complete a workforce analysis to determine underrepresentation in your workforce representation and how to address the gaps.²²
- 8 Create **conflict resolution processes** to address reported issues, including incidents of workplace discrimination and harassment.

Additional Resources

- [BCOHRC. \(2025, July 25\). **Equitable hiring and promotion.**](#)
- [BCOHRC. \(n.d.\). **Economic benefits of employment equity.**](#)
- [Brain-Heart Interconnectome. \(2025\). **Tips to Create Safe Spaces.** University of Ottawa.](#)



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2. Fernandez et al., 2023
3. Canadian Human Rights Commission [CHRC], 2025
4. Gauthier, 2016
5. British Columbia Office of the Human Rights Commissioner [BCOHRC], 2025; Gauthier, 2016
6. Doria et al., 2024
7. Ezeafulukwe et al., 2024
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11. Ibid.
12. BCOHRC, 2025
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- Gauthier, C. (2016). Obstacles to socioeconomic integration of highly-skilled immigrant women. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 35(1), 17-30. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-03-2014-0022>
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JOB AID #3. SAFETY & WELL-BEING



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY & DEIA

Psychological safety is crucial for the workplace to thrive, for employees' wellness, and for positive and respectful team dynamics. In a psychologically safe workplace, employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas, admitting mistakes, taking risks, and being themselves without fear of negative consequences such as judgment, exclusion, or bullying.¹ **Psychological safety** prevents the harms to employees' mental health and well-being.²

The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace was released in 2013.³ This standard is a voluntary guideline that organizations and employees can use to improve workplace factors and address potential issues that can cause psychological harm.⁴

The principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) work with psychological safety to create effective work environments characterized by openness, acceptance, and growth.⁵ DEIA and psychological safety mutually affect the success of their respective initiatives and intersect in many areas such as cultural responsiveness, respectful interactions, and self-awareness.⁶ For example, inclusive leadership, a DEIA initiative, also fosters psychological safety. Inclusive leaders are encouraged to be self-aware, be open to new ideas and perspectives, make space for all voices and team members, and challenge assumptions and biases, especially as it relates to individuals from equity-deserving groups.



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Effective integration of DEIA in psychological safety leads to:

- **Inclusive and collaborative work environments** that reduce fear or anxiety in workplace interactions and mitigate the effects of barriers influenced by individual differences or potential biases.⁷
- **Better outcomes for employers, staff, and the communities they serve** as greater employee engagement, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance likely occur as a result.⁸
- **Improved relationships between individual staff and leaders** that are built on trust, respect, and dignity.⁹



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Organizational objectives or commitment from leaders if a policy is not currently present.
- Some training on how to contribute towards a psychologically safe workplace.
- Some data collection capacity to gather information in the event of an incident.
- One or two initiatives to support psychological safety in the workplace.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Develop and communicate **organizational objectives** that express the importance of and the commitment from leaders towards psychological safety.

2

Provide **training and user-friendly resources** on psychological safety tailored to staff and leaders, including bias awareness training.¹⁰

3

Collect **feedback** on employees' experience of psychological safety in the workplace, especially in the event of a workplace incident. Gathering feedback will depend on the context, ranging from annual employee surveys to formal structures associated with workplace incidents such as harassment investigation processes.¹¹

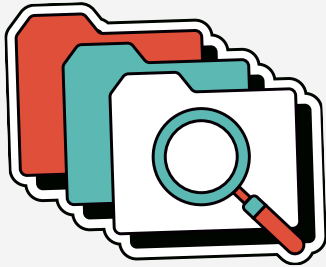
4

Promote the value of DEIA across the organization, including peer-to-peer and employee-management interactions and collaboration. Consider **one or two actions** per performance management cycle that can be implemented by staff and by leaders to support the creation of a psychologically safe workplace. For example, encourage leaders to model open communications and cultivate an environment in which everyone can learn from their mistakes.¹²



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Medium to Large-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Organizational objectives and policy statement with accountability mechanisms.
- Training framework and tools on how to contribute towards a psychologically safe workplace for all employees, including specific training for leaders/managers.
- Some data collection capacity to assess workplace climate or gather information in the event of an incident.
- An organizational plan to support, maintain and address issues related to psychological safety in the workplace.

Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Develop and/or review **policy statements** to articulate organizational objectives that support and promote psychological safety in the workplace. Ensure that the policy includes accountability mechanisms including reporting and addressing reported issues effectively.
- 2 Provide **training and user-friendly resources** on psychological safety tailored to staff and leaders, including bias awareness training.¹³
- 3 Collect **feedback** on employees' experience of psychological safety in the workplace, including workplace climate assessment and incident reporting.¹⁴
- 4 Promote the value of DEIA across the organization, including peer-to-peer and employee-management interactions and collaboration such as **developing and implementing a DEIA and/or Psychological Safety Action Plan**, or including clear DEIA and anti-racism goals and metrics in performance agreements or development plans for both leaders and staff.¹⁵

Additional Resources

- CSA Group & MHCC. (2014). **Assembling the Pieces: An Implementation Guide to the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.**
- Cote, C. (2025, May 20). **How to Build Psychological Safety in the Workplace. Harvard Business School Online.**
- CHRC. (2026, March 24). **Anti-Racism & Organizational Change: A Guide for Employers**



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JOB AID #4. TECHNOLOGY (AI)



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) & DEIA

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming workplaces as a catalyst for innovation, inclusion, and efficiency.¹ In various fields, AI is increasingly used by employees to process paperwork, summarize information, assist with writing, and do complex data analysis.² Artificial intelligence consists of computerized systems that can perform human-like functions, including speech recognition, language translation, visual perception, and problem-solving.³ AI models are developed and trained using algorithms that analyze large datasets for patterns in order to make predictions.⁴

Incorporating the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in AI is pivotal to ensuring that it mitigates rather than reinforces existing biases in society.⁵ For example, AI can increase consistency and fairness in recruitment processes by minimizing the effects of human bias on decision-making.⁶ However, if an AI's algorithm or training data discriminate against certain groups, it can reproduce and amplify embedded biases, leading to outcomes such as inequitable hiring.⁷ To prevent this, DEIA can be integrated into AI through several initiatives; for example, the participation of diverse voices in AI development, including equity-deserving groups such as persons with disabilities, women, and racialized populations.⁸ A DEIA-informed view also considers how AI-powered assistive technologies and other tools could foster inclusion and accessibility in the workplace.⁹



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO AI

Effectively integrating DEIA in AI can result in:

- **Greater standardization of evaluation processes in recruitment and hiring**, leading to more equitable job opportunities as AI's screening of candidates reduces the impact of human bias on employment outcomes.¹⁰
- **Inclusive and accountable AI systems** that have been transparently developed by diverse teams that deliberately mitigated bias in training datasets and algorithmic development.¹¹
- **Increased organizational capacity across staff and leaders** to responsibly use AI in informed and equitable ways that prevent harm.¹²



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO AI

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Organizational objectives or commitment on AI use, including an acknowledgment of the biases present in AI.
- Some training on using AI in the workplace.



Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Develop and communicate **organizational objectives** related to ethical and responsible AI use.¹³
- 2 Offer or refer staff to **training** and **user-friendly resources** on AI literacy in the workplace, increasing awareness of AI's advantages, limitations and risks.¹⁴
- 3 Ensure you consider DEIA when using **AI products**. For example, ensuring that text written by AI is in plain language or uses inclusive language.¹⁵





HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO AI

Medium to Large-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Organizational objectives and policy statement with accountability mechanisms for AI use and development.
- Training framework and tools on using AI in the workplace.
- An organizational plan to support DEIA integration in AI usage, acknowledging the bias present in AI.

Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Develop **policy statements** to articulate organizational objectives and guardrails related to ethical and responsible AI use, including DEIA considerations.¹⁶ Ensure the policy includes accountability mechanisms such as reporting and addressing issues.¹⁷

2

Provide **training** and **user-friendly resources** for staff and management that promote AI literacy in the workplace, increasing awareness of AI's advantages, limitations and risks such as algorithmic bias.¹⁸

3

If using AI in specific work functions and/or occupational groups, introduce **AI tools** responsibly with monitoring mechanisms in place. Ensure proper training and processes to periodically check for biases or barriers impacting population groups (e.g., filters).¹⁹ For example, monitor how the use of AI is impacting HR processes and its impact on the diversity of the workforce.

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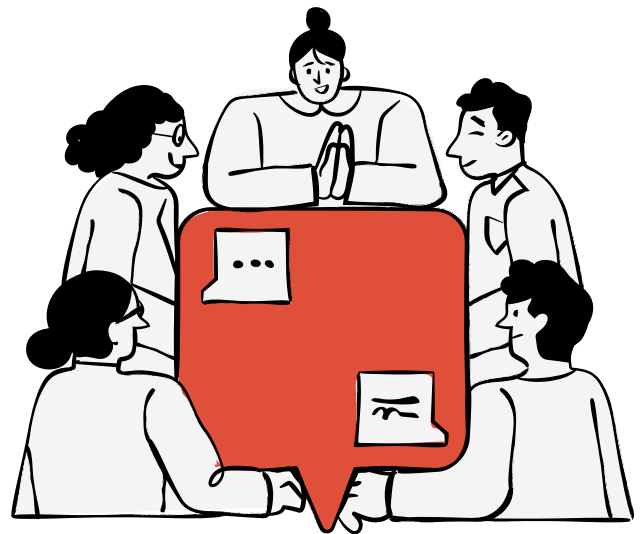
JOB AID #5. COMMUNICATIONS



COMMUNICATIONS & DEIA

Effective communication in the workplace is foundational to organizational success.¹ **Effective communication** occurs when messages are fully understood by their intended audience.² Communication shapes relationships across organizations through various channels such as meetings, emails, newsletters, and internal discussion boards or the use of an intranet site.³ Communications are also critical to socializing the values and guiding principles of an organization and can determine the success or failure of implementing an initiative. Incorporating the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in communications ensures their effectiveness and improves workplace interactions.⁴ DEIA can be integrated into communications in many ways, including the use of inclusive language, culturally competent communication, and accessible communication.

Inclusive language is communications that are “free from prejudice, stereotypes or discriminatory views of specific people or groups”.⁵ Inclusive communication is respectful and takes a message’s diverse audience into account.⁶ For example, using gender-neutral wording is a form of inclusive language that is free of stereotypes and mitigates bias such as not using gendered pronouns when referring to occupational roles in job descriptions or job posters.⁷



Culturally competent communication is another approach to apply DEIA and is specifically about the communication across various cultural contexts including geography, socio-linguistic and ethno-racial backgrounds, age and generation, to name a few.⁸ Applying this approach focuses on respect and recognition of cultural nuances and sensitivity and considers the communication barriers that individuals with different backgrounds may encounter in order to promote mutual adaptation and understanding.⁹ Culturally competent communication can involve avoiding the use of idioms, slang, sayings, or jokes that only make sense in the Canadian cultural context and being mindful of the various communication styles of different people.¹⁰



COMMUNICATIONS & DEIA

Lastly, **accessible communication** ensures that the needs, voices, and perspectives of persons with disabilities are understood and acknowledged in how information is delivered.¹¹ Using plain language is an example where communications are worded, designed, and structured so clearly that their intended audience can easily find what they need, understand and use the information provided without encountering barriers.¹² Also, accessible communications vary when engaging with different disability experiences.¹³ For example, when speaking at length with a person who uses a wheelchair, sitting down allows eye contact to be kept at the same level.¹⁴

Reducing background noises when talking to a person who uses a hearing aid is another accessible communication strategy.¹⁵ Supplying noise-cancelling headphones or allowing employees to use their own is a workplace accommodation that supports neurodivergent employees.¹⁶



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO COMMUNICATIONS

Effectively integrating DEIA in communications leads to:

- **Improved collaboration among staff and leaders** as trust and understanding are prioritized in workplace interactions.¹⁷
- **Positive and respectful work environments** in which employees feel safe, heard, and that they belong.¹⁸
- **Increased performance and productivity** with higher employee engagement, well-being, and empowerment amongst staff.¹⁹





HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO COMMUNICATIONS

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- General training on how to integrate DEIA in workplace communication such as inclusive and plain language.
- Access to specific tools that can check for accessibility and plain language such as reading levels.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Build **awareness** in your team by using available **resources** to learn how to apply DEIA in communications, such as an inclusive language guide, an online readability checker, or the [AODA Accessibility Standards Checklist](#) produced by the Ontario Government.

2

Recognize and appreciate diversity by creating inclusive spaces for diverse voices and perspectives. Encourage leaders to model inclusive communications to show how the organization values the DEIA principles.

3

Consider investing in **DEIA training** or **reference materials** to increase your team's cultural competencies and inclusive communication skills. This can include hosting lunch & learns, attending online events, and creating a diversity calendar.





HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO COMMUNICATIONS

Medium to Large-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Customized or personalized training on how to integrate DEIA in workplace communication, including specific supports for communications/public relations personnel, leaders, and management.
- Employees whose role includes checking for DEIA in communications or an individual whose primary role is applying DEIA in the organization.

Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Integrate DEIA priorities and approaches in your organization's communications plan and communication products.
- 2 Build capacity across the organization. Provide both general and targeted **training** tailored to communications personnel, staff, and leaders including how to practise inclusive, culturally competent, and accessible communication.¹⁹
- 3 Develop standard **tools** such as job aids and templates on how to integrate DEIA in communications. Invest in technology that supports the integration of DEIA in communications. Create accountability frameworks to ensure consistency.
- 4 Conduct an **audit** of your organizational website and other communications products to measure accessibility and compliance with relevant legislation, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the AODA, if applicable.
- 5 Highlight DEIA in your **corporate branding** and **public relations strategy** as part of the organization's corporate social responsibility. Ensure that leaders and staff are authentically onboard and practicing DEIA prior to engaging in this communications strategy.

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JOB AID #6. PUBLIC RELATIONS & ESG



PUBLIC RELATIONS, ESG & DEIA

Public relations (PR) is the bridge linking people and organizations. PR involves strategic communication and engagement between an organization and its diverse interest holders such as community partners, investors, clients and customers, and the general public.¹ PR connects an organization's brand to its corporate social responsibility (CSR), fostering trust, brand reputation and consumer loyalty.² In small and medium-sized organizations, PR can include uploading content to social media, sharing client testimonials, or providing resources in French and English within the Canadian context.³ For large organizations, PR may be run by a department with specialized personnel that address different functions such as media relations, internal communications, crisis communications, and digital communications.⁴

One of the ways that organizations can highlight their CSR efforts in their PR strategy is through the convergence of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and the global framework of **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)**. In particular, DEIA initiatives are increasingly being recognized as a component of the social dimension of ESG that organizations can highlight as part of their CSR efforts and PR campaigns.⁵ PR professionals can highlight the organization's commitment, the tangible actions and initiatives as well as the impact and results as they relate to both DEIA and ESG. This PR strategy can also highlight how DEIA and ESG align with the organization's mission and vision and contributes towards relationships with interest holders.

The intersection between DEIA and ESG is not only beneficial for external interest holders but also effective in building a positive and respectful workplace climate and culture that supports employee engagement. For example, meaningful DEIA in the workplace improves interactions among staff and management through inclusive leadership practices, fostering of workplace psychological safety, and advancing diverse representation across all levels of the organization.⁶



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO PR & ESG

Effectively integrating DEIA in PR and ESG can lead to:

- **Improved organizational reputation** resulting in a stronger brand, fostering trust and loyalty amongst consumers and investors for a greater access to markets and opportunities.⁷
- **Better engagement with interest holders and employee retention** underlined by a stronger sense of belonging.⁸
- **Increased long-term sustainability** as organizations show commitment through tangible actions and results with real metrics and transparent reporting.⁹

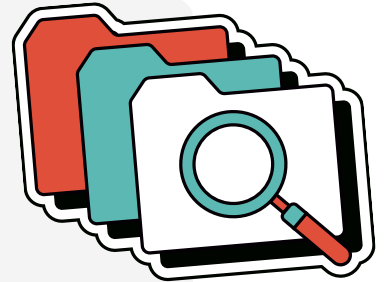


HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PR & ESG

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Integration of ESG and DEIA in organizational commitments.
- General training to promote awareness of ESG among staff and leaders, including its convergence with DEIA.
- One or two initiatives that promote ESG and DEIA that can be highlighted in their PR efforts.



Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Cultivate awareness of ESG among staff and leaders by using publicly available resources including **guides** or **training** such as the Government of British Columbia's [Environmental, Social and Governance \(ESG\) 101 Guide](#).¹⁰
- 2 Integrate ESG and DEIA in your **mission, vision, and values**, communicating commitment as part of your PR strategy.¹¹
- 3 Develop a few **ESG objectives** informed by staff and leaders that are specific to your organization's capacity, goals, and interest holders, including DEIA initiatives relevant to the social component.¹²
- 4 Consider feasible **DEIA workplace initiatives** to meet ESG goals such as DEIA hiring practices, team activities to celebrate cultural events or improving working conditions such as the pursuit of psychological safety.¹³
- 5 Leverage easy ways to communicate ESG and DEIA progress with investors and interest holders such as highlighting efforts on your organizational website or social media.¹⁴



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PR & ESG

Medium to Large-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Integration of ESG and DEIA in organizational commitments and strategic priorities.
- Training and resources to promote awareness and build capacity to integrate ESG and DEIA amongst staff and leaders, including PR personnel.
- Investment in DEIA initiatives such as inclusive hiring practices and workforce analysis and representation efforts to bolster the social component within the ESG framework.
- Capacity to monitor and report ESG and DEIA progress as well as communicate outcomes to investors and interest holders as part of the organization's PR strategy.

Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Cultivate in-house capacity concerning ESG and DEIA among PR personnel, general staff, and management through tailored **training** and **user-friendly resources** such as infographics and tip sheets.¹⁵

2

Create an **ESG Strategy** informed by staff and leaders while ensuring alignment with DEIA initiatives and strategies, as well as your organization's **mission, vision, and values**.¹⁶

3

Design and implement an **ESG Action Plan** of key performance indicators aligned with your strategic ESG priorities.¹⁷ Include DEIA workplace initiatives in the plan such as workforce analysis, supporting Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), and equitable mentorship opportunities.¹⁸

4

Adopt a recognized **ESG framework** to report on ESG progress such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards or Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB).¹⁹

5

Incorporate ESG and DEIA into your **PR strategy**, highlighting commitments in corporate branding and communications to investors and interest holders aligned with accessibility standards.²⁰

Additional Resources

- [ESG Centre of Excellence. \(2024\). Environmental, Social and Governance \(ESG\) 101 Guide. Government of BC.](#)
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JOB AID #7. WORKPLACE CULTURE



WORKPLACE CULTURE & DEIA

Workplace culture describes the beliefs, attitudes, norms, and traditions of an organization.¹ When a positive workplace culture exists, people want to engage because they feel that their growth, efforts, and well-being are valued.² A positive workplace culture makes employees “happier, healthier, and more productive”.³ Workplace culture is influenced by leaders as well as how employees perceive the policies, practices, mission, and vision of their organization.⁴

Integrating the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in workplace culture is critical as it promotes a sense of belonging among staff and leaders.⁵ **Belonging** is when individuals sense that they are important members of a group, their diverse backgrounds are embraced, and that their voices are heard.⁶

More inclusion in the workplace fosters belonging and improves the workplace culture.⁷ Inclusive practices such as accessible communications and connecting diverse staff to mentors contribute to work environments where people feel welcomed, respected, and prioritized.⁸ Applying DEIA also addresses barriers to a positive workplace culture by ensuring diverse employees’ participation and lived experiences inform efforts to improve the work environment.⁹



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO WORKPLACE CULTURE

Effectively integrating DEIA in workplace culture can lead to:

- **Psychological safety in the workplace**, as civility and respect is one of the 13 psychosocial factors of The National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.
- **Informed and inclusive decision-making** driven by diverse perspectives provides more robust and inclusive decision-making where biases and barriers are reduced.
- **Empowered employees** who feel appreciated, accepted, supported, free to innovate, and encouraged to reach their fullest potential.¹⁰
- **Lower stress, burnout, and turnover rates** as greater respect and belonging contribute to more positive relationships among staff and leaders.¹¹
- **Increased organizational pride and employee morale**, resulting in better teamwork, productivity and employee engagement.¹²



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO WORKPLACE CULTURE

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Organizational values integrated with DEIA.
- Capacity to gather feedback from staff on workplace culture.
- Investment in one or two initiatives that promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.



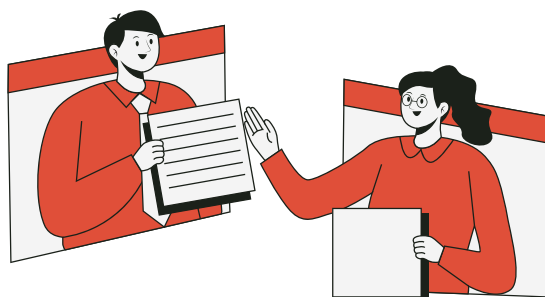
Tips for applying DEIA:

1 Integrate DEIA principles into your organization's **values** such as your core beliefs or guiding principles.¹³ Ensure these values are well-defined, consistently communicated, and modeled by leaders.¹⁴

2 Gather **feedback** from employees including members of equity-deserving groups about their experiences and suggestions related to how to improve workplace culture through methods such as anonymous surveys, open forum meetings, or one-on-one talks with leaders.¹⁵

3 Cultivate a positive and inclusive workplace culture through DEIA initiatives informed by employee feedback.¹⁶ For example, consider sharing results from employee surveys to manage employee expectations consistent with how to improve psychological safety in the workplace.¹⁷

4 Refer staff and leaders to available **resources** or **training** on how to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.¹⁸





HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO WORKPLACE CULTURE

Medium to Large-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Respectful Workplace Policy with an accountability framework to recognize workplace climate issues and mechanisms to address concerns.
- Data collection capacity to collect employee feedback on workplace culture.
- Investment in initiatives to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.
- Training and tools to increase awareness of how to develop a positive and inclusive workplace culture among staff and leaders.

Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Create and/or update your organization's **Respectful Workplace Policy**, ensuring that DEIA principles are included in your workplace's code of conduct.¹⁹ Include an accountability framework to operationalize the policy, outlining procedures to address issues both formally and informally.²⁰

2

Gather **feedback** from all employees, including members of equity-deserving groups. Get insights on their experiences and expectations as it relates to workplace culture, and identify similarities and differences based on people's diverse backgrounds through employee engagement surveys, focus groups, and/or workplace climate assessments.²¹ Ensure open and civil communication between staff and management in the development and implementation of efforts to apply their feedback.²²

3

Develop and implement **strategies or action plans** focused on DEIA or psychological safety such as pursuing workforce representation, a comprehensive DEIA training pathway and professional development opportunities, access to equitable mentorship opportunities, and a robust and fair workplace accommodation system.²³

4

Provide **tailored training** and **user-friendly resources** such as job aids and infographics to staff and leaders on how to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.²⁴ See Checklist 4 in [Paving the Way: DEIA Toolkit for Employers](#) for examples.

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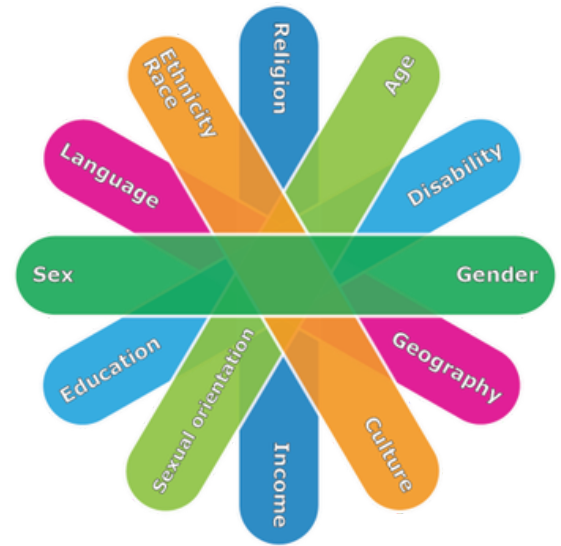
JOB AID #8. PHYSICAL FACILITIES



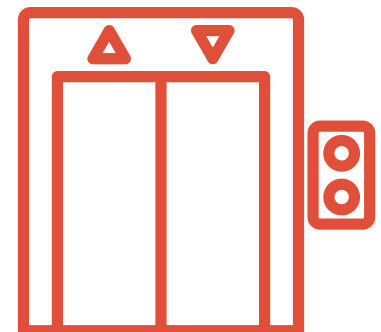
PHYSICAL FACILITIES & DEIA

Physical work environments critically impact employees' professional and social wellbeing.¹ **Physical facilities** include any buildings, infrastructure, or equipment that make up a person's workplace surroundings.² Changes to work environments can exist as accommodations.

Accommodations are reasonable workplace adjustments that address barriers people encounter based on protected grounds under human rights legislation such as the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.³ Some aspects of people's socio-demographic characteristics are considered as protected grounds within the human rights legislative framework including sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, family status, and religious beliefs.⁴



Having the flexibility to make the necessary accommodations is important when applying Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) to physical facilities.⁵ Accessible supports in the context of physical disabilities such as elevators and ramps are often thought of in reference to accommodations.⁶ Employees may encounter different types of place-based barriers that can hinder their inclusion and sense of belonging.⁷ For example, neurodivergent employees may need accommodations to address sensory needs such as sound, temperature, touch, light, scent, or food sensitivities.⁸





PHYSICAL FACILITIES & DEIA

Accommodations for one group of employees can also benefit other staff. For example, scents from cosmetics or cleaning products can trigger anyone's environmental sensitivities, causing reactions such as mild irritation, nausea, or feelings of anxiety.⁹ Environmental sensitivity is a medical condition and legally recognized as a disability, requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodation such as a scent-free policy.¹⁰ Incorporating DEIA in accommodations can also account for factors influenced by religion.¹¹ For instance, a prayer room is a designated quiet space at work where staff can engage in their religious practices, ensuring their beliefs are respected.¹² This space can then be used for multiple purposes, providing accommodations to diverse needs of employees.



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO PHYSICAL FACILITIES



Effectively integrating DEIA in physical facilities can result in:

- **Better employee well-being and mental health.** An inclusive physical workplace that considers both the visible and invisible diverse needs of its employees and has established accommodations significantly improves both the psychological and physical health of employees.¹³
- **Improved employee retention** as employees feel a higher sense of satisfaction in their roles and a stronger sense of belonging, reinforced by organizational infrastructure that meet their needs including the normalization of accommodation supports.¹⁴
- **Increased employee engagement and productivity** as inclusive workplaces are created through initiatives such as addressing sensory overload and providing ergonomic environments, appropriate lighting, and green spaces. These approaches have a positive impact on both the physical and mental health of employees, increasing their engagement and enabling them to work more effectively.¹⁵



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Small to Medium-sized Organizations



What you need:

- Awareness about the employer's duty to accommodate according to provincial and federal legislation.
- Awareness of available accommodation supports.
- Clear policies and decision-making processes, including a process on how to submit accommodation requests.

Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1 Ensure HR personnel and leadership team members are aware of the employer's role and responsibilities related to accommodations. Distribute readily available resources and training materials.
- 2 Develop a **confidential system** for submitting accommodation requests, including during hiring processes, through methods such as one-on-one meetings with a leader.¹⁶ Ensure respectful, individualized approaches when offering feasible options to staff.¹⁷
- 3 Raise awareness about the accommodation supports available including the request process through onboarding or orientation, workplace committees, or training.¹⁸
- 4 Consider feasible accommodations that support all staff such as ergonomic awareness and furniture and using scent-free cleaners in the workplace.¹⁹



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Medium to Large-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Organizational policies and infrastructure for accommodation supports aligned with legislative requirements.
- Awareness amongst employees about the accommodation supports available and how to access them equitably.
- Training and tools on available accommodations supports, including the accommodation request process and system.
- A commitment to continuous improvement such as periodic audits and reviews, and investments in inclusive design.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Include **leadership competencies** related to accommodations and accessibility that build on leaders' awareness and highlights organizational commitment to support the diverse needs of employees.²⁰

2

Develop **policies, strategies and/or action plans** that support the integration of DEIA in the built environment, including accessibility addressing both invisible and visible disability.²¹

3

Develop a **confidential system** for submitting accommodation requests, available during the hiring process and accessible across the employee's career.²²

4

Provide **training** and **user-friendly resources** such as resource guides and tip sheets to job candidates, staff and leaders on how to navigate the accommodation request process as well as access existing supports.²³

5

Build **accommodations** into your organizational practices, policies, and culture through adjustments such as modifications to physical facilities and workplace policies.²⁴ This includes raising awareness that employees can request for workplace accommodations such as assistive technologies or ergonomic workstations.²⁵

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JOB AID #9. FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

FINANCIAL SYSTEMS & DEIA

Financial systems allocate funds throughout an organization. These can include areas such as budgeting, procurement, investment decision-making, and employee compensation.¹ Incorporating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) into financial systems considers DEIA in how resources are organized.² Treating DEIA as a strategic investment embeds value-creation and risk management into organizational operations, resulting in long-term impacts and sustainability.³



Advancing DEIA in financial areas of an organization creates value in multiple ways both internally with employees and financial processes, and externally with clients, partners, and other interest holders. Integrating DEIA in financial decision-making enables organizations to make evidence-based and informed decisions that enable a more effective approach to resource allocation.⁴



Investing in an accessible workplace also leads to financial outcomes including returns on investment (ROI), risk mitigation through regulations compliance, and a competitive advantage.⁵ For example, redesigning your website to be more accessible by offering screen reader software, text descriptions for images, and colour palette options to users can generate more online traffic and consumer purchases.⁶



FINANCIAL SYSTEMS & DEIA

In the area of procurement, considering supplier diversity can involve partnering with organizations owned and operated by people of equity-deserving groups, enhancing your equitable impact on the community.⁷

As for its impact on employees, pay equity and flexible benefits are equitable compensation approaches that provide fair outcomes to staff while considering their contributions, needs, and the barriers that they may encounter.⁸ **Pay equity** emphasizes “equal pay for work of equal value” and is a fundamental human right.⁹



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Effectively integrating DEIA in financial systems can lead to:

- **Improved brand image and loyalty from clients or consumers** who share the same DEIA values.¹⁰
- **Higher employee engagement and productivity** through inclusive workplaces that empower employees, foster a sense of belonging, and invest in psychological safety and well-being.¹¹
- **Reduced risk** by mitigating legal, financial, and reputational liabilities.¹²
- **Better financial outcomes** such as lower turnover rates and HR costs.¹³
- **Greater innovation and competitive advantage** as clients and top talent from diverse backgrounds are increasingly attracted to your organization.¹⁴



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Awareness and buy-in amongst leaders to integrate DEIA into financial decision-making.
- One or two actions every year that tangibly demonstrate the application of DEIA in financial decisions or investments.



Tips for applying DEIA:

- 1** **Raise awareness** about the positive outcomes from integrating DEIA into financial decisions such as strengthening organizational performance, managing financial and legal risks, and creating a positive brand.¹⁵
- 2** For **budget decisions**, align financial expenditures with DEIA organizational values and community impact.¹⁶ For example, consider who to partner with when investing advertising dollars or procurement decisions.¹⁷
- 3** Find ways to **equitably invest in your employees** by addressing their diverse needs that are required from employers such as accommodation supports and workplace safety including psychological safety.¹⁸
- 4** Consider **making benefits flexible** such as the use of employer-provided credits (e.g. wellness spending accounts).¹⁹
- 5** Apply a DEI lens to work towards **pay equity**. Conduct a pay band (e.g., salary ranges) review once every 2-3 years, ensuring similar roles are grouped together and removing pay gaps.²⁰

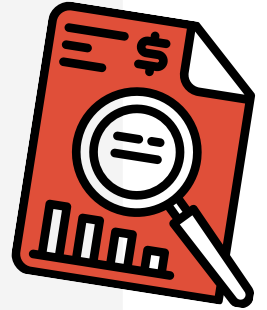


HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Medium to Large-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Strategic use of DEIA investments in financial planning and decision-making.
- Relevant financial policy frameworks, processes, and metrics that include DEIA as a consideration.
- Resources are allocated towards DEIA such as funding for DEIA Strategies or investments in pay equity.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Develop and build capacity to integrate **DEIA in financial metrics** to inform budget and financial decisions and forecasting.²¹ For example, use tools such as disaggregated budget analysis, supplier diversity spend tracking, accessibility cost-benefit analysis, and DEIA ROI reporting.²²

2

Create **systems-levels mechanisms** that integrate DEIA in the organization's financial framework such as the use of a DEIA lens in financial decisions, the use of equity impact assessments and approvals for major expenditures, and a supplier diversity policy and process.²³

3

When applying a DEIA lens, **ask questions** such as: Who benefits and how? How can this investment address diverse needs, contribute to fair outcomes, and address inequities?²⁴

4

When conducting a **disaggregated financial analysis**, consider financial reporting by region, community, or demographics where appropriate.²⁵

5

Consider **employer investments** in accommodations, employee wellness, workplace safety, and pay equity.²⁶

6

Allocate **sustainable funding** to support DEIA initiatives such as DEIA staffing and strategies.²⁷

Additional Resources

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JOB AID #10. SERVICE DELIVERY



SERVICE DELIVERY & DEIA

Service delivery includes any tools or processes organizations use to provide a service to clients.¹ Service delivery is about responding to one or several needs of the intended recipients and typically achieves specific desired outcomes such as the delivery of benefits, information, or assistance.² The different ways that services are delivered shape how organizations interact with individuals and partners, which affect the organization's brand, public opinion, and for private sector organizations, consumer loyalty.³ By adhering to the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), organizations can ensure fair and equitable access to services.

Integrating DEIA in program design and implementation is part of how to incorporate the principles in service delivery. This ensures that services are delivered in ways that are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of people and communities.⁴ For example, considering DEIA promotes culturally responsive services and engagement with clients, making sure that people of all backgrounds are able to access and benefit from the services being offered.⁵ Cultural responsiveness includes both an understanding of and a respect for a person's culture, and it ensures that meaningful efforts are taken to consider and integrate cultural understanding in the services being delivered.⁶ Cultural responsiveness ranges from:

Cultural awareness → Cultural sensitivity → Cultural competency → Cultural safety⁷

The following definitions and examples are adopted from the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Public Health Agency of Canada:

Cultural awareness is about acknowledging that cultural differences exist between yourself and others.

Example: A person can identify or is aware of "the other" or "another culture".

Cultural sensitivity recognizes the importance and the need to respect cultural differences. It involves making decisions that benefit others based on their culture.

Example: A frontline worker recognizes the importance of respectful communication with a client based on their cultural context.

Cultural competency is the ability to self-reflect on one's own cultural values and how these impact their interactions. Cultural competency is the commitment to continuous learning to gain a deeper understanding of another's culture. In the workplace, it is the ability to assess and respect the values, attitudes and beliefs of persons from other cultures and respond appropriately.

Example: An organization considers cultural diversity in planning and implementing programs and services.



SERVICE DELIVERY & DEIA

Cultural safety is an outcome or feeling of safety that is experienced and defined by people. It is based on respectful interaction, acknowledges that all people are culture-bearers, and understands that we must reflect on and challenge our own attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and values to address power imbalances.

Example: An environment is free of microaggressions or discrimination and people feel safe when receiving programs and services.⁸

Prioritizing DEIA in service delivery also mitigates barriers that various population groups may encounter, including persons with disabilities.⁹

For example, applying plain, inclusive and multiple languages in communications as well as listing services at affordable price points are ways that you can foster access to your services.¹⁰ Ensuring physical locations that follow universal design principles as well as having adequate parking, appropriate lighting, and scent-free spaces are also ways to integrate DEIA in service delivery.¹¹



RESULTS OF APPLYING DEIA TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Effectively integrating DEIA in service delivery can result in:

- **Increased access to services across different population groups** as staff are equipped to meet people's diverse needs.¹²
- **Stronger client relations** through service provision that acknowledges lived experiences to support cultural responsiveness.¹³
- **Higher public trust in services** influenced by evidence of cultural competencies and compliance with federal and provincial accessibility standards and human rights legislation.¹⁴

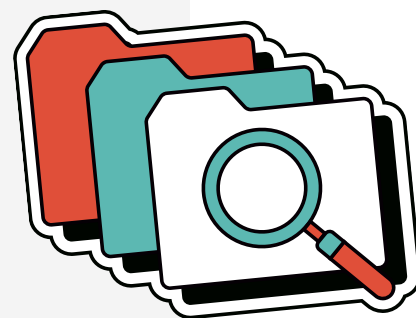


HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Small to Medium-sized Organizations

What you need:

- Access to available tools and resources to build capacity for equitable service delivery.
- Some data collection capacity to gather information about your clients and their feedback.
- One or two actions every year that tangibly demonstrate the application of DEIA in service delivery.



Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Build **awareness** about the benefits of integrating DEIA in service delivery. Use **tools or resources** such as training, existing standards, and available accessibility guides.¹⁵

2

Gather information about your clients such as who is accessing your services through registration forms or postal codes collected at checkout. Knowing who your clients are gives insights as to who may be experiencing barriers to accessing your services.¹⁶ See Strategy 9 (p. 49) in [Paving the Way: DEIA Toolkit for Employers](#) for guidelines on data collection.

3

Prioritize **accessibility in communications** by leveraging available technologies.¹⁷ Consider using plain and inclusive language in written materials and offering information in multiple formats such as large print.¹⁸

4

Explore feasible ways to increase **physical accessibility** in built environments such as using scent-free cleaning products and having ramps and automatic doors.¹⁹



HOW TO APPLY DEIA TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Medium to Large-sized Organizations

What you need:

- An intentional commitment to integrating accessibility and cultural responsiveness.
- Robust process for gathering information about clients and their feedback as part of the organization's continuous improvement processes.
- Investment in initiatives that promote DEIA in service delivery approaches.
- Application of DEIA in program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Tips for applying DEIA:

1

Meaningfully commit to applying DEIA in service delivery, such as creating awareness and the necessary workplace culture that support cultural responsiveness and **cultural safety** both amongst employees and clients.²⁰

2

Gather **client feedback** on your different services to ensure that there are equitable access and benefits.²¹ Use different ways to gather information about and from your clients such as using online surveys, advisory committees, targeted consultations, or other collaboration opportunities.²²

3

Identify and respond to the expressed needs of your clients, considering the **diverse needs** of various population groups. Regularly review client feedback and respond, such as integrating them into service improvements.²³

4

Use available tools to integrate DEIA in service delivery such as the use of a **DEIA lens** or highlighting examples how **Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** has been used in government programs.²⁴

5

Promote compliance with the relevant **human rights and accessibility standards** in communications and service delivery.²⁵ For example, develop an action plan to review service locations for physical accessibility in alignment with AODA's checklist items for making buildings and spaces accessible as well as universal design principles.²⁶

Additional Resources

- [AODA. \(2008-2026\). **Make Buildings And Spaces Accessible.**](#)
- [CEACS. \(2023\). **AccessAbility Playbook – Introduction. ESDC.**](#)
- [Saskatchewan Health Authority. \(2022\). **Cultural Safety in the Saskatchewan Health Authority: Why is it important?**](#)
- [Government of Canada. \(2025\). **Take the Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA Plus\) course**](#)



Scan the QR code to access
“Paving the Way: DEIA
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End Notes

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