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Guide for Hiring with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lens

For Leaders and Managers

Created for the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement

Overview

Purpose of this guide
This guide is intended to support hiring managers and leaders in their efforts to recruit, hire, and retain a diverse workforce. As part of its ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, The Association of Animal Welfare Advancement recognizes the importance of implementing practices that address and mitigate implicit biases in hiring. This guide was created to equip leaders and managers with tools to support The Association's strategic DEI goals and ensure we are an employer of choice for diverse talent.

What the guide includes
This guide will provide a holistic roadmap for ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion at every stage of the employment process. It includes assessment tools, checklists, promising practices, and worksheets to assist you and your team.

How to use this guide
This guide can be used by individual hiring managers as well as teams looking to ensure transparency and equity in employment decisions, from hiring to employee development and career advancement. The guide is meant to be a resource, not a requirement. We hope it will help leaders and managers continue to enhance their hiring practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion. If you have any questions or concerns about your hiring process, it is always best to reach out to Human Resources.

Alignment with The Association's strategic goals

1. Leadership and Communications to the Field	Model visible and proactive leadership, shaping the narrative around DEI for animal welfare.
2. Learning and Development to the Field	Provide ongoing and sustainable DEI-focused learning opportunities and resources to support individual development and diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environments.
3. Recruitment and Retention	Research and share best practices, and support efforts for improving diversity at all levels of the workforce in animal welfare, from the boardroom to internships.
4. Engagement and Outreach to Underserved Communities	Develop and implement strategies to improve relationships and services to underserved communities.
5. Equitable Policies and Practices	Review and recommend changes to existing practices that perpetuate systemic inequality and unfairly punish vulnerable populations.

Understanding Implicit Bias

What are implicit associations and biases?

Implicit associations are mental shortcuts based on internalized messages and mental conditioning that lead a person to automatically associate one thing with another. Implicit associations may cause us to automatically assign people with certain characteristics with a social role, job function, or anticipated behavior (e.g. associating men with work and women with family obligations). (Morukian 2022)

Implicit bias/unconscious bias refers to attitudes or prejudices that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner without awareness, intention, or control. Implicit biases are often in opposition to one's consciously held beliefs, and very difficult for a person to identify in themselves. (Morukian 2022)

How does bias impact decision making in hiring?

A great deal of research has been done on the influence of our implicit associations and biases on decision making when it comes to employment practices. Here are just a few examples:

What's in a name?
Individuals who "whiten" their names on their resumes are twice as likely to get called for job interviews ([Gerdeman 2017](#)). Simply changing one's name from "Lei" to "Luke" or "José" to "Joe" led to more invitations for interviews. Many African American applicants will also omit information from their resumes that indicate affiliation to Black organizations and even scrub out achievements like scholarships or awards if they may reveal their race. The research finding racial bias and discrimination in hiring practices has yielded similar findings for over two decades, indicating that racial bias and discrimination continue to be a systemic issue ([Quillian 2017](#)).

Subjective questions lead to stereotypes
Studies have shown that performance evaluations, especially with open-ended questions, are often laced with stereotypes and implicit biases. When performance evaluations offer less structure and more subjective questions, people are more likely to rely on stereotypes, especially around gender and racial identity ([Nishiura McKenzie, et a, 2019](#)). Women and people of color are often given lower ratings and referred to in performance evaluations with stereotyped language, and are often rated lower in terms of personality factors and career potential ([Nittle, 2021](#)).

Biases influence decisions around employee performance and potential for advancement
Studies show that White women and people of color are often judged more subjectively in terms of performance. Studies have shown that performance evaluations of women and people of color often include references to personality-based traits (warm, friendly, enthusiastic). They are judged more harshly than White men when they do not demonstrate such traits ([Williams et al 2021](#)). They are also more harshly critiqued than White men for mistakes. This is referred to as the "prove it again" bias (Williams et al 2021). Additionally, women and people of color are more likely to be expected to perform "household chores" in the office, such as scheduling meetings, taking notes, and cleaning up common spaces. There is also research that indicates biases in terms of who is interested and capable of traveling, taking on extra projects, presenting to senior executives, and seeking promotion.

Biases lead to disengagement, demoralization, and departures
Employees, in particular those from marginalized identity groups, who perceive bias in the workplace, are nearly **three times** more likely to be disengaged at work, to say they have withheld solutions or innovative ideas, or to say they plan to leave the organization in the next year (Caprino 2017).

I don't have biases...do I?

Yes, we all do!

Think of our implicit associations like software programming that is constantly running in the background of our mind. We don't pay attention to it or even notice it, but it influences our perceptions of situations, interpretations of others' behaviors, and decisions.

Our conscious minds are often not aware of how those implicit functions affect our daily lives. In fact, we typically believe that we are making rational, data-driven decisions when in fact our subconscious mind reacts to a situation or person and makes an instantaneous decision based on our emotional reaction. Then we consciously seek out data that reinforces that subconscious belief (Kahneman 2012).

Biases don't make you a bad person, but once you are aware that biases exist, it is your responsibility to override them to make more sound, equitable decisions.

How can I manage biases in my life?

In their seminal book, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, Mazarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald offer recommendations for "outsmarting the mindbugs" that are our implicit biases. This is a good overarching set of practices to integrate into your everyday life:

Get to know your implicit associations.
  a. Acknowledge that you have biases, because you are human!
  b. Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) to identify possible biases.
  c. Consider messages you have received early in life about various identities, and how those have impacted how you see yourself and others.

Build in moments of reflection to identify and challenge biases in your decisions.
  ○ What is influencing my perception?
  ○ What data am I using to make this decision?
  ○ What blind spots might I have?

Expand your exposure to diverse identities.
  d. Read or do research on individuals and groups you have less experience with.
  e. Look for images and stories that counteract stereotypes (e.g. female airline pilots, influential BIPOC leaders, gender nonbinary people engaging in everyday activities).

f. Intentionally interact with and build relationships with people who are not part of your immediate social circle. Identify the identity gaps in your network and look for opportunities to build connections with people you have less exposure to.

These are just a few overarching recommendations to help you identify and override potential biases in your life. The rest of the guide will provide additional specific ideas and suggestions for managing biases specifically in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and employee development.

One note, the suggestions in this guide are not necessarily going to work for every organization. The guide is meant to inspire reflection and new ways of thinking about hiring and retention practices. Use the guide as a resource for designing a DEI approach to hiring that is unique to your organization's needs.

DEI Inflection Points Across Employee LIfe Cycle
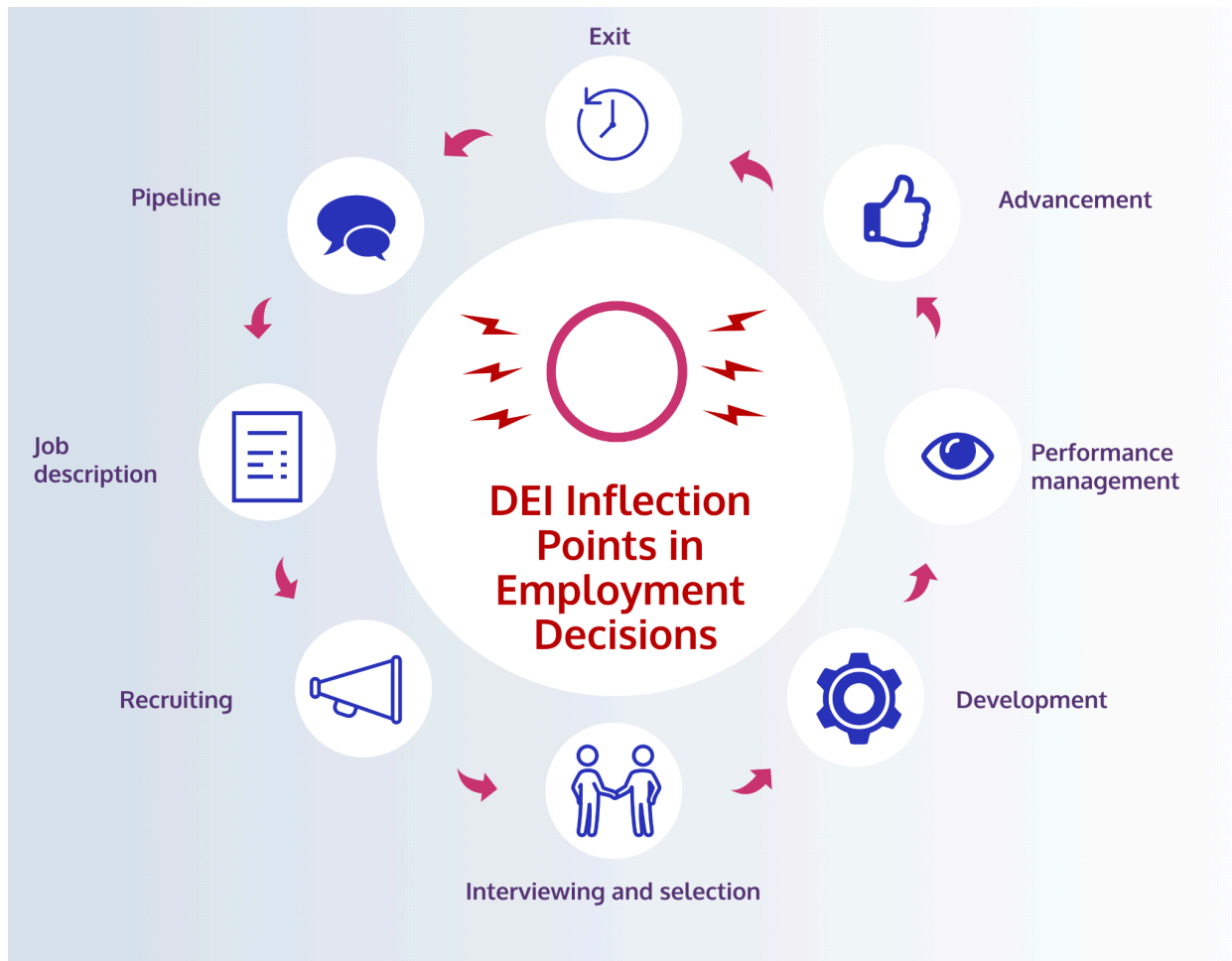
DEI Inflection Points in Employee Life Cycle

There are many inflection points across the cycle of an employee's time in an organization where a DEI lens is needed. Let's examine each and determine strategies for enhancing DEI practices.

Pipeline Development

Often, we think about the employee life cycle starting with the hiring process, but let's back up and consider first and foremost the pools from which we seek candidates. Hiring for diversity does not mean simply posting job descriptions on websites or listservs of minority groups when the job is vacant. Before the job is posted, even before a vacancy occurs, leaders and managers should examine the networks they typically use to advertise job openings, both formally and informally.

- ☐ Assess the diversity of your team
- ☐ Do an analysis of your network and identify gaps
- ☐ Expand outreach to diverse educational institutions
- ☐ Build relationships with diverse student organizations
- ☐ Expand outreach to diverse professional institutions

Job Description

Before you post the job opening, review the position description to make sure it doesn't leave out any potential candidates who would be a good fit. For example, consider academic requirements, years of experience, and professional certifications. Does the job really require an advanced degree? Does the job require someone to be locally employed or is remote work an option? This is not to lower the qualifications required, but to consider where biases may lie even in the job description itself.

- ☐ Review position descriptions to verify academic requirements (e.g. high school or equivalent, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's degree)
- ☐ Use gender neutral pronouns or switch to second person (e.g. "they" or "you")
- ☐ Revise gendered language that may implicitly influence who applies (check out the Gender Decoder as one of many tools that might reveal interesting insights)
- ☐ Review major requirements for any that might be "nice to have" but are not necessary for a candidate to have experience in to be considered for the position
- ☐ Share your commitment to DEI with a statement in every job description
- ☐ Highlight benefits that contribute to an inclusive and equitable workplace (e.g. flexible hours, mentoring, leave for new parents, well-being initiatives, etc)

Recruiting

Consider where you advertise job postings and who has access to those resources. The more expansive your existing network of potential candidates is, the more likely you will have a diverse pool of qualified individuals to choose from.

☐ Identify opportunities to present or participate in recruiting events that cater to a diverse audience of potential candidates. During events, ensure that you or those representing your organization engage inclusively with candidates. (e.g. use similar greetings for every candidate, spend approximately equal amount of time with each candidate, etc)
☐ Make sure recruitment events are accessible. Ask in advance what needs people have.
☐ Provide closed captioning for deaf and hard of hearing candidates.
☐ Send presentation materials in advance for individuals to preview, and provide guidance for using any technology during the event (especially when there are virtual participants).
☐ Build in extra time for people to process and respond.
☐ Assess current job posting sites - what is the demographic profile of viewers or members to these sites?
☐ Leverage job posting pages among diverse student and professional organizations
☐ Beyond posting on websites, attend professional and community events (virtually or in-person) that give you a platform to network with diverse potential candidates

Interviewing and selection

Make sure the interviewing process is inclusive and equitable. Make sure that the interview options are accessible in terms of location, time options, and space. For instance, does someone need to have a private car to get to the interview or is public transportation an option? Can a candidate have access to a private space to pump if they are a nursing parent? Are there gender neutral restrooms? Is the space where the interview will take place accessible for someone with a physical disability? Standardize the interviewing process to mitigate biases, in terms of who is involved in the interviews and selection, what questions are asked of candidates, and how different criteria will be weighed when making selections among equally qualified candidates.

☐ Use a standard format and set of questions for each candidate
☐ Consider an interview team that includes diverse employees to avoid groupthink in decision making
☐ Agree upon the selection criteria and how you will weigh qualifications so there is no "moving the goalpost" after the interviews are conducted
☐ Take notes that focus objectives on the candidate's skills and qualifications. Avoid subjective judgments
☐ When two candidates have similar levels of qualifications but bring different skills or strengths, consider going with the candidate from an underrepresented or marginalized identity group.

Development

Often, organizations pay more attention to the recruitment and hiring of diverse employees than the experience employees have once they join the team. This can lead to issues with turnover or an uneven representation of diversity in entry level positions and very little diversity in terms of promotions.

It is imperative that leaders and managers focus on supporting the career aspirations of all their employees, and be cognizant of potential biases that may impede development for underrepresented populations. This may include mentoring and coaching, stretch assignments, and skills development for employees.

From an equity perspective, prioritizing support for historically underrepresented employees is crucial. This is not to disadvantage others, but simply to acknowledge that we are socialized to unconsciously perceive some identity groups as the norm when it comes to positions of leadership or success. Leaders and managers should be conscious of the decisions they make in terms of developing their staff so they don't perpetuate systems that unfairly reward some at the expense of others.

- ☐ Schedule regular check-ins with each employee that are fully devoted to individual development. Make this separate from performance appraisals.
- ☐ Listen deeply to employees' aspirations. Work out a development plan with each employee and provide equitable resources (e.g. training opportunities, on the job learning, etc)
- ☐ Invite guest speakers from different career paths to share their experiences and advice with employees. Seek out diverse guest speakers whenever possible.
- ☐ Follow up with employees on their development. Provide mentorship and encouragement, facilitate problem solving, and offer feedback to support their ongoing development.
- ☐ Look for opportunities to assign high profile tasks or stretch assignments to employees based on their career aspirations. Don't assume every employee will be comfortable or know they can come to you and ask for these opportunities.

Performance management

As we discussed earlier in this guide, biases have been found to influence managers' interpretations of employee behaviors and performance, and often people from marginalized or underrepresented groups are mischaracterized or more harshly criticized.

Every step in the performance management process should be a two-way process between the employee and manager. This includes setting goals and expectations, identifying performance improvement needs and support/resources for success, and offering and receiving feedback.

Throughout the performance management cycle, be sure to regularly check in and provide constructive feedback to all employees to help them achieve high performance. Notice who you may give more benefit of the doubt to. Who are you willing to explain processes to more often if they don't understand or perform well at first? During performance evaluations, focus on basing your evaluation on objective criteria, and avoid any language that is subjective or ambiguous.

- ☐ Create a set of open-ended questions to ask of each employee during 1:1 meetings regarding performance, to ensure it's a two-way conversation. These questions should focus on gauging employee interests and motivations, concerns, and needs.

- ☐ Set clear performance objectives with employees with explicit behavioral expectations or deliverables.
- ☐ Depending on the employee's existing level of skills, offer guidance on how to successfully fulfill performance objectives. Don't assume all employees have the same foundation of experience to know what to do to be successful.
- ☐ Monitor each employee's performance and provide feedback early, frequently, and compassionately. Document successes and areas of improvement throughout the performance appraisal cycle so achievements don't go unnoticed or forgotten.
- ☐ Offer appreciative, reinforcing feedback to all employees, even those who may be struggling.
- ☐ Stick to objective, observable data points to evaluate employees' performance.

<u>Advancement</u>

If you have selected a talented team of employees, created an inclusive and supportive work environment, and provided adequate development opportunities and feedback to support successful performance, you will most likely have a strong bench of diverse candidates for promotions and career advancement.

It is still important to be conscious of any potential for biases that may impede underrepresented individuals from advancement opportunities. If you have employees who are good performers but in a job track that does not have much opportunity for growth, talk to them about their career aspirations. Work with them to develop new skill sets that may set them up for advancement in a different work area if that is of interest to them. Don't assume an employee isn't interested in advancing their career if they have not openly talked about it with you. Take the initiative to find out and encourage them to envision themselves in other positions if that is of interest.

- ☐ Look for opportunities in your organization for employees to grow or advance.
- ☐ Keep your eyes and ears open with peers in other departments to identify opportunities for career growth.
- ☐ Actively commit to promoting qualified employees from underrepresented identity groups.
- ☐ Check for biases in the criteria you use to select employees for promotion. Who do you see as "management material" and why? Look for descriptions that are more subjective and may indicate implicit bias (e.g. *strong, decisive, quick learner, creative, analytical* versus *lacks confidence, volatile, aggressive, low energy, lacks drive, doesn't take initiative*). Focus on objective, observable actions and deliverables that indicate the individual's abilities.
- ☐ Be conscious of how bias influences promotions. For example, research shows that women and people of color are more likely to be judged by their past performance, while White men are judged on their potential.

<u>Exit</u>

It is increasingly rare that employees stay in the same job, organization, or even career forever. Even prior to the global pandemic, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found the highest quit rates in history (Liu 2019) and the number of individuals looking to change jobs post-Covid is even higher. This trend will likely continue in the future, as technological advances and a globally interconnected world will continue to redefine the job market and employee expectations about where, when, and how they work.

When an employee decides to leave, sit down with them for an exit interview to gather feedback on their experience. Listen intently to the feedback and consider how to use constructive feedback to make changes to structures, practices, and organizational norms.

Also, many employees value the opportunity to leave and then return to an organization they love. If appropriate, connect employees who are seeking new ventures or challenges to colleagues in other organizations. Sometimes, talented employees who leave for "greener pastures" gain new skills and then return with fresh perspectives and renewed commitment to the organization, which can be a big asset to your team's success.

- ☐ Schedule exit interviews with outgoing staff. Ask for honest observations and experiences and LISTEN to the answers. Ask follow up questions to gain clarity.
- ☐ Acknowledge challenges or faults with openness. ("I take ownership of the fact that you did not get the professional development opportunities we had agreed upon")
- ☐ Consider doing exit interviews with employees while they still work for you! Sit down with individual employees and ask them what would cause them to leave the team or company. Find out what you can do to retain an employee *before* they decide to freshen up their resume.
- ☐ Look for trends or patterns in terms of why people leave. Don't accept these patterns as a foregone conclusion. Have a conversation with leaders and HR about trends they see and what can be done to more effectively retain talented staff.
- ☐ Don't explain or justify away a revolving door, especially if the trends indicate that people from certain identity groups leave at a higher rate. Engage with outgoing employees and current employees to identify solutions to the turnover issue.

Worksheet 1: Assess individual networks

As humans, we are innately drawn toward people who we perceive are "like" us. We may gravitate toward people who think, speak, look, and act like we do. Sometimes we feel a sense of connection with someone without even meeting them simply because we went to the same university, grew up in the same area, or share a common interest or experience.

When you are in a position where you are responsible for making employment decisions, it is important to start by examining your own social networks and thinking about what and who you feel a natural affinity for.

This is a valuable exercise for you to do on your own to uncover the potential diversity gaps that exist in your network and to begin expanding your networks to maximize diversity.

1. Make a list of the 6-10 people in your professional life you are closest with. These are the people you trust most, rely on, and enjoy spending time with.

Name/ Initials	Relationship (e.g. boss, friend, employee, mentor)

Next to each person's name, identify core identity dimensions.

Name/Initials	Relationship	Race/ethnicity	Age group	Gender identity	Sexual orientation	Disability	Other*

*Add columns if you notice any other notable similarities (e.g. socioeconomic status, educational experience, professional background, political affiliation, etc)

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1. What gaps do you notice in your social network? How do these gaps align with gaps that may exist in your organization? In your field? (e.g. highly educated, US-born, White?)

2. How might these gaps lead to blind spots in your thinking or decision making?

3. What can you do to build connections with people from groups that are underrepresented in your network?

Worksheet 2: Assess the Diversity of the Team

You can also use this to assess the diversity of your team and determine strategies for expanding your collective networks to build a strong, diverse team.

1. What demographics currently exist on your team?

2. Where are there some gaps or over-reliances?

3. What are the potential implications of these gaps?

4. How might the team benefit from becoming more diverse?

Worksheet 3: Relationship Building

Educational Institutions

1. Start with your existing network. Reach out to colleges, universities, and educational institutions you attended or have connections with.
2. Talk to faculty and staff in your former programs. Let them know you are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in your organization and field, and want to support students looking to enter the field and professionals interested in advancing their careers.
3. Present to student or alumni groups about your organization and possible career opportunities.
4. Ask faculty and staff if they are able and willing to connect you with their colleagues at other educational institutions to spread the word.
5. Connect with diverse student organizations at colleges and universities with well-known programs in your field (e.g. African American/Black, Asian American, Latino/Latinx, Native American/Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, students with disabilities, etc).
   - National Black Student Alliance
   - Muslim Students Association
   - Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has a list of professional and student associations for the LGBTQIA+ community
6. Go beyond the "big name" schools. There are hundreds of smaller, lesser known colleges and universities with high quality programs that go untapped. The following sites may be helpful:
   - Collegefactual.com provides searches by ranking (non-traditional students, student diversity, veterans, international students) and by major.
   - Niche.com is a search engine with various filters, including all-women, HBCUs, and Hispanic-serving institutions.

Professional Associations
1. Identify professional associations in your field. Often, associations have resources and special interest groups that may be a good starting point for broadening your hiring search. For example:
   - Black DVM Network for Black Veterinarians, Technicians, & Assistants
   - Pride VMC for LGBTQ+ veterinary medicine professionals
   - Multicultural Veterinary Medical Association to lead veterinary medicine towards the racial and ethnic diversity, equity, and inclusivity that our profession needs to serve a multicultural society.

2. Reach out to professional associations for historically marginalized groups, for example:
   - Black Achievers Professional Network works to connect, educate and economically empower the Black community.
   - League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) offers a job bank for recent graduates and aspiring professional to search for opportunities.
   - Ascend is the largest pan-Asian professional association in North America, and offers career fairs and resources to pair promising professionals with job opportunities.

Worksheet 4: Reducing Bias in Employee Process

Consider the following questions. Answer to the best of your knowledge and experience. Identify actions to support more inclusive and equitable hiring practices.

Question	Answer	Action
Pipeline		
How diverse is my organization or my team? (consider various dimensions of identity - race, ethnicity, disability, age, gender identity, etc)		
Where is the diversity in my organization (across the board or relegated to certain job functions, departments, levels)?		
How diverse is my professional network? What gaps exist?		
With what institutions or organizations do we currently have relationships? (e.g.		

universities, professional groups)		
What diversity gaps exist in terms of our relationships with educational and professional organizations that we need to address?		
Recruiting		
How and where do we currently post job openings? What are the implications in terms of advertising and appealing to diverse candidates?		
Who is involved in determining required qualifications for a job posting?		
What opportunities are there to make these job postings more appealing and accessible?		

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Interviewing and Selection		
Who is involved in the interview process? Do we have adequate diversity on our interviewing and selection panels?		
What is the interview protocol and is it consistent and equitable?		
What is the selection criteria for positions and what qualifications and skills do we prioritize?		
Who has the final say in candidate selection? What biases might exist?		
Do you stay in contact with		

candidates who were qualified but not selected in the event another opportunity comes up?		
Might you refer qualified candidates who were not selected to other colleagues outside your department or organization?		
Development		
How is mentoring conducted (formal or informal) and who has access to mentors?		
How are stretch assignments or high profile tasks delegated? What potential for bias exists?		
Who is invited to represent the organization or attend public events like trade shows, conferences, etc?		

Who has access to resources for skills development?		
Performance management		
How often do you meet with each employee to monitor performance and offer feedback?		
How objective are the criteria you use to evaluate performance? Where might there be potential for bias?		
What words or phrases might be biased? (e.g. "strident," "enthusiastic," "lacks initiative," "poor communicator")		

Advancement		
How do you currently talk with employees about their career goals? Are there employees with whom you have or have not had such conversations? Why or why not?		
What options might you explore with employees who are looking to advance their career or change their focus?		
Exit		
How are exit interviews conducted and by whom? What do you do with the feedback gathered in exit interviews? What themes or trends can you find across exit interviews?		
How do you currently maintain communication with former employees?		

Are there opportunities to connect or reconnect?		

Worksheet 5: Personal Commitments

What will you personally commit to doing to advance DEI in your hiring processes as a leader or manager at The Association?

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Action: I will commit to…(behavior, process changes)	**Description**: This will look like…(time, resources, collaboration with others)	**Expected Outcome**: As a result, …(representation, retention rates, innovation, new products, reputation as employer of choice)