

Guide for Communicating the Case for DEI in Animal Welfare

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are not new concepts, however in the last few years organizations have increased their focus and efforts to address DEI needs within their institutions and across their industries.

Although research overwhelmingly shows that DEI is critical for organizational success and sustainability, many leaders continue to struggle gaining commitment and maintaining momentum of their DEI efforts. On top of that, DEI has been misconstrued as a polarizing issue in the culture wars that continue to maintain a hold over our society.

The need for institutional change to embrace DEI across the animal welfare profession will require deep commitment and collaboration. The following guide is intended to equip leaders in animal welfare with information to communicate the importance of DEI for their organizations and for the animal welfare profession overall.

6 Philosophies for DEI Work

According to Maria Morukian in her book *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Trainers: Fostering DEI in the Workplace*, there are six distinct but interrelated philosophies that underpin DEI work:



Description of Each Philosophy

Each philosophy and subsequent approach will influence the way a DEI initiative is designed and its results. There is not necessarily a “right” or “wrong” philosophy. It’s important to consider how to include some elements of each of these concepts into the work. Different philosophies may resonate more or less with the individuals and groups animal welfare leaders are trying to engage. For example, Board members may be more interested in business results while employees may be drawn toward advocacy and allyship. It’s important to consider the audience and what language and information will resonate with them most.

Each philosophy has a counterbalance. These are not necessarily opposing philosophies; rather they can be considered centripetal, with DEI as the central body around which all six conceptual categories contribute energy.

Social Justice	Social justice is centered around equal rights, equal access, and equal treatment. It’s about acknowledging and working to right the wrongs of the past in terms of people who have been systematically marginalized, mistreated, or oppressed in society.
Business Results	The business results philosophy is backed up by years of research in organizational development and behavior that indicate that organizations with cultures that value DEI are more innovative, have higher potential for financial performance, reach a broader market share, have higher customer satisfaction, and attract and retain a wider pool of talent.
Compliance	The compliance philosophy focuses primarily on following regulations, policies, and practices related to fair and equitable treatment. Whether it is adhering to EEO policies and/or following internal rules around equity, the compliance philosophy prioritizes ensuring everyone is accountable for adhering to the same set of rules within the organization.
Advocacy and Allyship	The advocacy and allyship philosophy embraces the notion that every individual bears an obligation to be a vocal proponent of DEI and actively challenge and disrupt the existing structures that impede DEI progress. This philosophy is centered on individuals, both those in dominant and nondominant groups, to advocate not only for their own needs but to be visible allies for others who may be treated disparately.

Valuing Differences	The valuing differences philosophy is rooted in the notion that our differences make us stronger. It centers around exploring divergent experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. It celebrates and calls forth uniqueness. This philosophy prioritizes celebrating and including the multiple dimensions of identity that make each of us different from one another.
Unity	The unity philosophy is rooted in the notion that our common humanity binds us together. This philosophy focuses on emphasizing communal goals, highlighting basic human needs and behaviors over differences, and building harmony among individuals and groups.

(Morukian, 2022)

Questions to consider:

1. Which philosophies resonate most with you?
2. Which are likely to resonate with other key stakeholders?
3. What do you think the following stakeholders care about?
 - a. Board members
 - b. Donors
 - c. Employees
 - d. Volunteers
 - e. Consumers/existing customers
 - f. Communities in your service area
 - g. Other?

Making the Case for DEI

The demographics of the U.S. changing

- By 2045, the U.S. Census estimates that the nation will be minority non-Hispanic white (Vespa, Medina, Armstrong, 2020). In fact, the percentage of today's public high school students is *already* majority non-white, with Hispanic students making up 28 percent of the population.
- The racial and ethnic diversity of rural areas across the U.S. is increasing. The 2020 U.S. Census found that 24 percent of rural Americans identify as people of color, an increase of 3.5 percent in less than a decade (Rowlands and Love, 2021).
- The U.S. population is also aging considerably, as Baby Boomers grow older and live longer while birth rates slow. By 2030, one in five Americans will be at retirement age (Vespa, Medina, Armstrong, 2020).
- By 2030, the net international migration will outpace natural increase as the main driver of population growth in the U.S., with the foreign born population in the U.S. rising to 17 percent (Vespa, Medina, Armstrong, 2020).

DEI is generally good for business

- According to studies conducted by McKinsey & Company, companies with more gender and racial/ethnic diversity financially outperform their competitors by up to 36 percent. Since 2014, the **gap in financial performance has steadily increased**, indicating that the organizations that do not prioritize diversifying their leadership and management are increasingly lagging behind financially (McKinsey & Company, 2020).
- Organizations with great diversity and equitable and inclusive cultures outperform other organizations in terms of innovation (Lorenzo et al, 2018).
- Organizations that have greater representation of diversity are able to empathize with and meet the needs of diverse populations (Cision, 2023)
- Teams that have more diversity outperform homogeneous teams because they bring multiple ways of thinking about and solving problems (Page, 2008).
- Organizations with leadership teams with more *inherent* diversity (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation) and *acquired* diversity (e.g. personal and professional experiences) have significantly higher levels of market share and performance (Hewlett, et al, 2013).

DEI is Crucial for Nonprofits

- 70 percent of nonprofit CEOs believe for their organizations to achieve their goals, it is very or extremely important that the organizations' full staff are diverse. However, only 36 percent agree that their existing staff is very or extremely diverse. (Captrust, 2022)
- A 2017 study found that an overwhelming majority of individuals from nonprofit organizations believe that more diversity in organizations will help them become more connected to communities, increase creativity within their organization, improve management and employee relations, and create new funding networks (Center for Effective Philanthropy, 2018).
- Nonprofits that quantify DEI metrics are more satisfied with the diversity of their board members, staff, communities served, and grant recipients than those who don't (Captrust, 2022).

DEI is Important for Attracting and Retaining a Talented Workforce

- Employees who report higher levels of inclusion and equity in their workplace also report higher levels of engagement. Gallup (2022) found that high employee engagement scores are correlated with factors that indicate equity and inclusion:
 - organization is fair to everyone
 - people are paid fairly for the work they do
 - employees have same opportunities for advancement as others
 - employees are treated with respect
 - employer committed to building employees' strengths
 - if an employee raises concerns around ethics or integrity, their employer would do the right thing
 - people are comfortable being their authentic self
 - people feel valued on their team
- Over the last decade, job seekers have increasingly indicated that an organization's commitment to DEI is significant to their decisions of employers. Almost 80 percent of college graduates in a recent study by the National Association of Colleges and Universities indicated that a diverse workforce is very important to them, compared with it ranking 12 out of 15 in priority a decade ago (Miller, 2021).
- In a 2019 survey of nonprofits by Race to Lead showcase significantly higher challenges for executive leaders of color that lead to lower job satisfaction, burnout, and turnover:

- Nearly half of executive leaders of color indicated their race had negatively impacted their advancement, up from roughly one-third (35%) in the 2016 survey.
- Leaders of color reported receiving significantly less peer support, mentoring, or training to prepare them for their leadership roles than white leaders reported.
- Executive leaders of color felt that they lacked opportunities for advancement compared to white leaders.
- Leaders of color were more likely to feel challenged by the stress of being called on to push DEI efforts in their organization.
- Leaders of color reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with compensation and felt they were compensated less than white peers do the same work.
- Leaders of color reported more challenges with relationships with funders than white leaders.
- Executive leaders of color who took over from a white leader indicated greater pressure and less trust from their Board.

Animal Welfare has a Problematic History Supporting the Needs of Minoritized Communities

- Research shows that the human-animal bond is equally strong across racial and ethnic identities. People from all identity groups showed the same general levels of attachment, humanization, commitment, and integration with their pets (Kogut and Feldman, 2022).
- Pet owners indicate the same level of commitment to pet care and average the same number of vet visits per year (Kogut and Feldman, 2022).
- However, Black and Latinx pet parents are significantly less likely to acquire their pets from animal shelters (Kogut and Feldman, 2022).
- Black pet owners are more likely to say they had a negative experience at an animal shelter or said they were discriminated against when trying to adopt due to their race/ethnicity (Kogut and Feldman, 2022).
- Responses from the 2021 State of DEI in Animal Welfare Assessment identified significant barriers and access to care for underrepresented communities, in part due to biases and stereotypes about communities of color and low income communities, as well as policies that often prohibit opportunities for adoption or unfairly punish certain communities.
 - Judgmental attitudes towards communities of color and working-class communities.

- Animal welfare organizations harbor biases towards communities of color and working-class communities. These biases show up in pet surrenders and adoptions.
- There is a disconnect between individuals in animal welfare organizations and the communities being served.
- Responses suggest that stereotypes and assumptions about communities of color and their experiences with, exposure to, and care for animals persist.
- Pet adoption policies create a barrier for POC and low-income individuals.
- Language barriers persist, particularly for organizations that serve Latinx populations.

People from minoritized identity groups are adversely affected by the animal welfare movement’s “tough-on-crime” approach.

- In *Beyond Cages* (2019), Justin Marceau argues, “animal protection groups champion the elimination of systemic violence, and yet, it is not uncommon for animal advocates to label the dismissal of criminal charges or short prison sentences in the realm of animal abuse as among the most urgent problems facing the animal protection movement. Leaders of the movement have made clear that carceral animal law policies are a critical strategic priority.”
- Marceau (2019) states that “such a view of the movement-that incarcerating rogue animal abusers will dislodge long standing social norms about animals- is empirically unfounded and conceptually dangerous.”

The animal welfare profession is overwhelmingly homogeneous in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

- Traditionally minoritized and marginalized identity groups, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities, people in lower socioeconomic conditions, and immigrant populations, have historically and categorically been excluded from the workforce in animal welfare.
- The veterinary profession has a significant lack of racial and ethnic diversity, with very little to no progress to this day. According to the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC):

- Total enrollment of students in veterinary schools has increased over the last three decades steadily by about 2 percent every year.
 - Representation of women has risen from 40 to 80 percent in that time.
 - However, progress has been much more limited in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, with over 80 percent of current veterinary students identifying as White.
 - Similarly, 82 percent of the respondents from the 2021 State of DEI in Animal Welfare Report identified as White and 81 percent as women.
- The AAWA 2021 State of DEI in Animal Welfare Report found a significant lack of diversity exists at every level of the profession, especially in leadership.
 - Over half (52 percent) of respondents disagree that there is adequate representation of race/ethnicity in their organization, and 45 percent do not believe staff reflects the diversity of their community.
 - There is a lack of racial diversity in animal welfare. While many attribute this to a lack of diversity in the surrounding community, others recognize that the issue persists even in diverse areas.
 - The lack of diversity is especially notable amongst leadership and boards, even when the organization is diverse.

Animal welfare organizations struggle to attract, hire and retain employees and volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

- Animal welfare organizations are unable to recruit/attract and retain people of color. Some attribute this to a lack of targeted recruitment efforts. However, many view the issue as a lack of people of color applying for positions, a lack of interest, and a lack of “qualified” candidates of color.
- Low pay jobs and unpaid internships hinder DEI efforts.
- People do not see a clear career development path.
- 44 percent of Black respondents disagreed that there is a clear career development path for employees of different backgrounds, compared to 28 percent of White respondents. LGBTQIA and respondents with disabilities also expressed higher levels of disagreement.
- Lack of adequate accommodations and accessibility.

People from racially/ethnically minoritized groups experience pervasive exclusion, unfair treatment, and discrimination and harassment in their workplace.

Findings from the 2021 State of DEI in Animal Welfare Report found that:

- Overall, 30 percent of respondents said they have observed discrimination or harassment in their organization. **40 percent of Black respondents have observed discrimination or harassment in their organization.**
- Overall, 15 percent have experienced discrimination and harassment, but **40 percent of Black respondents said they have experienced discrimination and harassment in their organization.**
- Only half of Black respondents believe leadership in their organization would take appropriate action if someone experienced discrimination or harassment, compared to 75 percent of White respondents.
- Almost half of Black respondents had negative or neutral responses to the question of whether diverse employees are treated fairly, compared to 19 percent of overall respondents.
- 52 percent of gender nonbinary/genderqueer/transgender and 59 percent of cisgender women believe that people who engage in bullying or harassment are held accountable, in comparison to 74 percent of cisgender men. The negative and neutral responses for these groups also indicate a similar discrepancy.
- Over 40 percent of gender non-binary and transgender men have heard people make jokes about identity groups in their organization.
- Almost one in four respondents has heard people in their organization make jokes about identity groups.

What is needed to address the DEI challenges in animal welfare?

Often, organizations and leaders experience barriers to effecting true and lasting change. The following are some important considerations to ensure that you and your organization build and sustain your DEI efforts.

Don't make it reactive or performative.

- Many institutions have attempted to make progress in terms of recruitment efforts or anti-bias training. These can yield some successes. However, a one-off effort or compliance-focused approach will not lead to long-term success. In fact, such efforts often lead to negative results. Research indicates that programs that focus on mandatory anti-bias training or only look at compliance around discrimination and harassment processes might even make organizations less diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016)
- What does work is focusing less on control and more on engagement, especially at the management level. When everyone across the organization feels personally invested in the effort and sees themselves as a part of the solution, progress can occur. Effective DEI efforts focus on maximizing engagement, facilitate exposure and interactions across diverse identity groups, and encourage social accountability (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016).

Start with ensuring leadership at the top levels of the organization are committed and accountable for instituting change.

Research on the best practices for DEI indicate that the work must be driven by strong and visible leadership. This means that leaders and board members see DEI goals and objectives as crucial to their individual and collective responsibilities. They visibly and actively support DEI efforts and are recognized as models and change agents for DEI. They are held accountable for implementing the DEI strategy, rather than relying solely on external consultants or internal actors (e.g. DEI Councils or HR). (Molefi, O'Mara and Richter, 2021)

Create solid strategies based on data to address the high priority issues of your organization and identify metrics for progress.

- DEI measures must be **explicitly** linked to the organizational strategy and be the responsibility of everyone, especially those in positions of authority. This means making DEI a key performance indicator at the individual and organizational level. When building out the organizational DEI strategy, consider 1) how DEI contributes to the organization's overall strategic goals and ultimate mission; 2)

what outcomes would indicate progress toward those goals, and 3) what action steps must be taken to achieve those outcomes. (Morukian, 2022)

- DEI should also be a core part of the rewards process to ensure that there is incentive to actively contribute to DEI goals and people who do put in the effort to make DEI goals a success are properly given credit and compensation. Every DEI decision needs to be based on data gathered on the needs and perspectives of the workforce, on relevant statistics from the organization as well as the field. Furthermore, it's important to gather insights from external sources, including the diverse communities served (Molefi, O'Mara and Richter, 2021).

Build lasting relationships with communities and their leaders to ensure efforts are directly in alignment with their needs.

DEI efforts often miss the mark when they do not directly and actively leverage input from the communities that they are working to serve and support. This is especially true within nonprofit organizations where leaders have historically fallen into the trap of the savior mentality in which they believe they know what's best for others. This is not only culturally insensitive but also perilous:

- leaders erode trust within the communities they are trying to serve
- organizations lose out on critical data about what will actually work for these communities
- communities do not get the products, resources, or services they need or will effectively use
- communities are not empowered to be partners in the solution process with the organization

Effective leaders take the time to build trusting and culturally sensitive relationships with diverse communities, taking time to build (or rebuild) trust. Then they use a data gathering approach to ensure that they fully understand the needs and concerns of their communities. Finally, they involve the community in the development of the solutions.

Develop and commit to a personal development plan that explores core identity dimensions and its relationship to power in animal welfare.

In *DEI Deconstructed* (2023), Lily Zheng states, "individuals must be stewards of the system within the environments they hold responsibility in." In other words, everyone must see themselves as bearing responsibility to change systems to achieve lasting DEI. The more power, status and influence individuals have, the more significant their role is in reducing and eliminating systems that perpetuate harm.

Zheng further notes that change-makers must “take identity seriously if only because many people, especially marginalized populations, already do so.” Leaders must reflect on their own identity dimensions and how they influence their choices and behaviors, and be open to exploring how others’ identities may inform their choices and behaviors. Ignoring or discounting the identities that are core to another person or group’s experience is destructive.

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