

Introducing the Antiracism Toolkit for Organizations

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This article serves as a brief introduction to and context for the creation of the recently released Antiracism Toolkit for Organizations. The Toolkit provides guidelines that organizations can utilize when developing policies, processes, and procedures that support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. DEI initiatives are essential to fostering an environment where people can thrive and be successful, thus furthering organizational goals and overall success.

The Toolkits for Equity project started with a 2019 proposal to the Triangle Scholarly Communications Institute as a way of providing resources for the scholarly communications community. The first toolkit, Antiracism Toolkit for Allies, was released in August 2020 and, a year later, the Antiracism Toolkit for Organizations¹ (TFO) came out. Several other toolkits are underway and all are hosted by the Coalition for Diversity & Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC),² and all are led and created by volunteers. Once published, all of the toolkits are freely available and downloadable in PDF form.

The latest to be released is the TFO, which is a robust document full of specific information that points to additional resources. While incredibly useful as a whole, the toolkit may also be approached as a sort of Swiss-army knife of tools that may be utilized individually. As the scholarly communications industry has identified the need to broaden outreach to historically marginalized communities, this article focuses on recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) staff sections of the toolkit as examples of how an organization might dip in and out of the toolkit to find the tools and resources.

It may be helpful to define what we mean by antiracism. Drawing on Dr Ibram X Kendi's work, an antiracist is: "One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and

none needs developing and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity." An antiracism framework provides structure and support for the work of identifying and addressing racism and White supremacy within an organization.

Attracting and Retaining a Diverse Staff

In order to attract and retain staff from a more diverse group, there are some essential steps that an organization can take when recruiting. Perhaps one of the easiest changes is to expand existing advertising channels. Find ways to reach historically excluded groups, such as advertising with historically Black universities and colleges. By adopting new practices, an organization may effectively systemize antiracism into their hiring practices. Some of the most crucial include intentionality behind language used in the job descriptions themselves and training for hiring managers and search committees.

When preparing to attract a more diverse candidate pool, language matters. TFO identifies requirements in job advertisements that may seem innocuous on the surface but that perpetuate systemic racism. Privileging of White culture and values is so intrinsically embedded into our culture that recruiters need to be able to take a step back and learn how to identify it. The overall tone of the job description is important. Is the tone one of elitism reflective of prestige and perfectionism in the organizational culture? Or does it emphasize inclusivity and investment in all employees? Consciously choosing to prioritize inclusivity in the job description helps to send a message to applicants that the organization is committed to it.

Use of industry jargon and an implied preference for higher levels of education and competency than essential requirements for the job are other hallmarks of White supremacy culture. Jargon makes the description incomprehensible to all but those who are already in the know, perpetuating the recruitment of people similar to those already in the organization. Instead, job descriptions may focus on training rather than on competency, especially for entry level positions, and highlight organizational values that promote equity and inclusion.

Hiring managers and hiring committees may act as gatekeepers to organizations and industries. By helping make hiring managers more aware of their own biases,

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an organization can help to counter those biases. A bias awareness checklist may be provided to managers to remind them of these biases and to help them catch themselves while interviewing. Preinterview training by a qualified human resources or DEI expert can engage hiring managers in thinking through how and why White candidates may have been previously privileged in the hiring process. As it is important to always include more than one person in the hiring process, hiring committees need tools and training as well. Organizational leadership should communicate their commitment to antiracism and explain why this is both necessary and beneficial. A useful tool for hiring committees may be postinterview score cards to be completed for each candidate that indicate minimum-level competencies for the open position to redirect the focus on skills rather than experience and background.

These are only a few examples of ways to systemize antiracism into recruitment practices—the TFO offers many more. Changes like these need to be seen as vital work, rather than extra work, confirming the commitment to addressing historical exclusions.

While the primary focus of human resources and hiring managers is to recruit a diverse workforce, retaining BIPOC staff is equally important and can be achieved through inclusive leadership.

At its core, inclusivity demands that leaders consistently recognize potential in and maximize the performance of BIPOC employees. Leaders must be cognizant of the unique narratives that BIPOC staff members possess and create an environment that allows them to be authentic in the workplace. By cultivating an environment where all employees are invited to share their ideas and perspectives, leaders create a workplace culture that thrives on value and respect.³ The result is a work environment that inspires creativity and innovation where all people can do their best work.

Inclusive Leadership

A workplace like the one described above does not happen overnight. Inclusive leadership is a process that needs to be cultivated and consistently practiced by all leaders in the organization—from the board of directors to the executive team to the line manager.

So how can leaders become inclusive? In *The Six Traits of Inclusive Leadership*,⁴ Juliet Bourke argues that inclusive leadership can only occur when

- People and groups are treated fairly, based on their unique characteristics versus stereotypes;
- Diverse employees are understood and valued as unique, while also accepting them as members of a group; and
- The diverse groups are leveraged for smarter ideation and decision making, reducing the risk of being blind-sided.

For leaders to be truly inclusive in their practices, Bourke further argues that they must demonstrate the following 6 signature traits:

- **Commitment:** aligning diversity and inclusion with a leader's personal values
- **Courage:** willingness to challenge inequalities and the status quo in the workplace
- **Cognizance of Bias:** awareness of personal and organizational biases and their impact on BIPOC staff
- **Curiosity:** being open and eager to learn and understand other perspectives without judgment
- **Culturally Intelligent:** being attentive to other cultures and recognize how perceptions and expectations of others, which may include biases, stereotypes, and generalizations, impact interactions
- **Collaborative:** empowering others and leveraging diverse thinking to create a space for psychological safety

The TFO includes more detailed information about each of Bourke's 6 traits and how engaging with them can help create a truly inclusive work environment. They provide a blueprint for leaders and introduce the question: What can organizations do to drive inclusive leadership and retain BIPOC staff?

Retention Strategies

When an organization hires BIPOC staff, it is essential to have a robust onboarding and retention strategy established. According to the Harvard Business Review, "Research has consistently shown that diverse teams produce better results, provided that they are led well. The ability to bring people from different backgrounds, disciplines, cultures and leverage all that they have to offer, therefore is a must have for leaders."⁵

Surveys show that BIPOC staff desire organizations to be inclusive and supportive by

- Providing BIPOC staff with an environment that is free of bias and microaggressions;
- Having psychological safety and creating safe space where they can come together to openly share their perspectives, ideas, and experiences, and to challenge the perspectives of others through healthy debate; and
- Having opportunities for growth and advancement.

The DEI efforts of an organization will only be successful if the organization takes specific measures to fill leadership roles with people who possess the qualities that Bourke outlined.

Creating leadership development programs to equip leaders with skills that they need to foster an inclusive culture and lead diverse teams is another mechanism that organizations can use to create more inclusive leaders and promote retention of BIPOC staff. Providing opportunities for professional development through training, sharing

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best practices with peers internally and externally, and participating in mentor programs are all effective ways to build inclusive leadership skills and capabilities.

This article provides a small taste of the wealth of information found in the full TFO. From getting an organization on the antiracism path to defining and enhancing organizational climate and culture, the full toolkit covers an incredibly wide range of topics to support and implement antiracism efforts in organizations of all types and at all stages of the journey toward creating an antiracist organization. By cultivating a workplace culture built on inclusivity, leaders will tap into their staffs' potential, maximize their performance, and live up to the true meaning of diversity and equality.⁶

References and Links

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CSE has launched a repository of journal and organizational statements related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Many journals have begun working to improve editorial board diversity, evaluate peer review processes for implicit bias, revise guidelines for authors, or develop training opportunities, while others are struggling with where to start.

Has your journal or organization issued a statement about policies and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion? Please consider sharing your efforts with our community by completing the [DEI Resources Submission Form](#) on the CSE homepage under “Resource Library.”

Submitted resources will be publicly available on the CSE website.

