

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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*A Guide for Event  
Service Professionals*

## **Our Mission**

ESPA is dedicated to elevating the event and convention service profession and to preparing members, through education and networking, for their pivotal role in innovative and successful event execution.

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## **ESPA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force**

In the Summer of 2021, the ESPA DEI task force was convened. Led by a statement of purpose, a focused goal, and the associated activities to support that goal, a team of 15 ESPA members set out to research, discuss, and assemble tangible tools, e.g., best practices, checklists, and resources to help ESPA members chart a course and refine their processes around DEI.

### **Task Force Statement of Purpose:**

ESPA is a leading association which advocates for the role and impact Event Service Professionals have within the Tourism and Hospitality industry. We are the voice of the Event Service profession and create opportunities that educate, engage, elevate, and empower Event Service Professionals.

Recognizing the benefits that diversity and inclusion bring to our industry, the ESPA DEI Task Force—through both intentional and meaningful strategies—will help to foster diversity and inclusion in the ESPA community; drive members' cultural and inclusivity awareness, thereby benefitting the industry; and create a guide to an inclusive path forward with collaboration, understanding and growth.

### **Task Force Goals:**

#### **Through education initiatives:**

- ★ Drive member cultural and inclusivity awareness, the benefits of which will extend to the events industry
- ★ Help members to understand the power Event Service Professionals have to impact DEI in their local communities

# ESPA DEI Statement

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ESPA is dedicated to developing best practices and tools to support diversity, equity, and inclusion for our membership which creates opportunities to connect to the culture of our communities.

We are committed to being a thought leader in the hospitality industry on the strategic and creative benefits of an intentional and meaningful DEI initiative that spans education, community outreach, marketing, and recruitment efforts.



# Definitions



## Diversity

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is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, physical ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been—and remain—underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society.



## Equity

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is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.



## Inclusion

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is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.



## Discrimination

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is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs. Having a range of individuals with various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experiences, and interests brings added value.



## Bias/Prejudice

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is a favorable or unfavorable preconceived feeling or opinion formed without knowledge, reason, or thought that prevents objective consideration of an idea, individual, group, or thing.

# Significance

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a movement that everyone, especially the hospitality community, should be knowledgeable about. Diversity and inclusion are more than policies, programs, or headcounts. Equitable employers outpace their competitors by respecting the unique needs, perspectives, and potential of all their team members. As a result, diverse and inclusive workplaces earn deeper trust and more commitment from their employees.

As Event Service Professionals in the hospitality and business event industry, we have an obligation to ensure we are connecting clients and visitors to engage with community partners. Often these efforts start before our official work begins.

## Inclusive Culture:

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Essentially, our work, where we choose to live, what community organizations we become connected to and how we engage our communities overall start with inclusion. DEI should be embedded in the culture and foundation of your organizational structure.

## Strong Foundation & Leadership:

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Inclusion must be engrained in the foundation, brand, values and culture of your organization's business and marketing strategy. Once this is set—ensure transparency and accountability on a governance and internal level. This should be an encouraged effort and movement from Leadership and filtered down through the brand and commitment of each position.

## Fostering a Sense of Belonging:

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In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the sense of belongingness and psychological needs is the connector of our basic needs (feeling safe and secure), and our self-actualization.

## Accountability:

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Inclusion describes the extent to which each person in an organization feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a team member. **Inclusion is a two-way accountability; each person must grant and accept inclusion from others.** In such an environment, every employee tends to feel more engaged and is more likely to contribute to the organization's business results. This type of environment requires people from diverse backgrounds to communicate and continuously educate in this area.

# Industry Engagement

## Key Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Organizations Stance on DEI

### US Travel Association

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Advancing DEI initiatives within the travel and tourism industry is key to strengthening organizations by bringing new ideas, perspectives, and open-mindedness to the forefront.

### Tourism Diversity Matters

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People drive business, organizations, and organizational change.

### Destination International

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Cultivating a tourism industry that represents a wide variety of individuals at all levels, celebrating the broad range of human differences among us, while embracing the commonalities we share.

## Leader Priorities

For leaders who are strategically committed to DEI, the following are ongoing priorities:

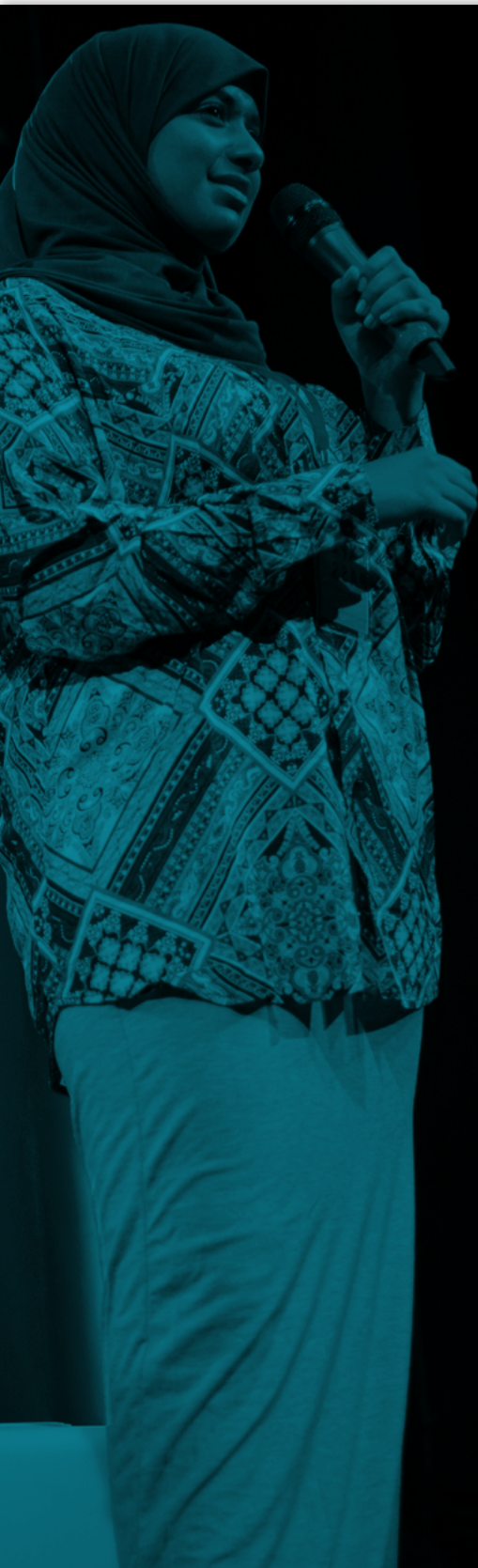
- ★ More internal and external pressures to live up to commitments to equity with action
- ★ Increased accountability for performative, symbolic or public statements vowing solidarity with organizations championing DEI positions
- ★ Actions that address issues of health care disparities and social determinants of health
- ★ Focus on supplier diversity strategies that improve access to professional development, selection processes and procurement opportunities for underserved and underrepresented businesses
- ★ Technology for the engagement and accessibility of persons with disabilities
- ★ DEI transparency and commitment that both satisfy and exceed compliance and obligation
- ★ A leadership and upward mobility pipeline that improves retention, recruitment, and development of diverse talent
- ★ Accountability for diverse re-staffing strategy in the tourism and hospitality industry

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**Three Pillars of  
DEI Practices:**  
*Education*  
*Inclusive Marketing*  
*Supplier Diversity*



# Education



DEI education, along with access to meaningful training tools, is key in equipping and empowering employers and employees to be successful in today's workforce.

## Education best practices to consider...

- ★ DEI Statement should be noted on company/organization website
  - DEI Pledge of Commitment/Support
  - Incorporate DEI initiatives into company's mission and core values
  - Ensure that your statement and commitment to DEI is visible on community platforms—this helps to hold you and your organization accountable.
- ★ Mandatory DEI training for all staff (once/quarter or semi-annually)
  - Access to complimentary self-paced DEI courses and training
  - Ongoing, in-person training with a certified DEI professional for staff to do team building and ask questions about certain real-life situations
  - Consider internal Professional Development. This could possibly lead to organizational structure changes and advancement opportunities.
- ★ Opportunities for offsite staff experiences to a destination partner that encompasses what DEI represents. This educates a diverse staff on different cultures and experiences, which represents who they work with daily.
- ★ Establish a team to champion DEI efforts and be open to developing leadership supported employee resource groups.
- ★ Develop a supplier diversity program
  - Be intentional by addressing DEI opportunities with business goals and company spend
  - Develop a diverse library of suppliers and community partners
- ★ Incorporate support of the organization's DEI commitment and mission in performance reviews

All the above, when incorporated with intention and thought, will assist in employee motivation, retention, and accountability.

# Inclusive Marketing

Inclusive Marketing starts with understanding the value of DEI, and the impact it has on an organization, the industry, each community, and the economy, overall.

Before visitors connect with your city, they visually look for signs of relatability, a welcoming connection and sense of belonging. As a resident in your community, you want to feel that you belong and are accepted to authentically engage and holistically experience your community.

## Inclusive Marketing best practices to consider ...

Inclusive marketing considers diversity in all forms including age, ethnicity, gender identity, and appearance. This also includes language, socioeconomic status, spirituality, and physical and mental ability. Marketing is about exposure and bringing people together through things they have in common and remember, in marketing to the community, you're also marketing internally.

- ★ Prioritizing inclusive marketing through thoughtful language, visuals, social media, and strategies to ensure you're reaching as wide an audience as possible in a way that properly reflects your company's values
  - To do this, you must first understand—who is your audience?
    - Consider a demographics study of your community—city and county
    - Assess your organization, Board, Stakeholders, and internal staff
    - In assessing your community and audience—you naturally assess what's missing and areas of improvement
- ★ Explore meaningful ways to celebrate holidays, national and cultural, and recognize awareness months—to allow for both celebration and education
- ★ Be thoughtful about visuals: ethnicity, age, gender, ability, size, socioeconomic status
- ★ Use inclusive language—in every marketing effort, job descriptions, website copy, written materials. This stays true internally and externally.



## Inclusive Marketing

- ★ Set a budget, strategic plan, with a statement—vision, mission, and values
  - Set Goals / Metrics and realistic timeframe of implementation
- ★ Be consistent. But diversity continuously changes; our approach may change with this
- ★ Website / Partnership Database:
  - Are categories available for audience to filter a search for diverse vendors and resources
  - Blogs, Social Media, Accolades, Events, and Images (Photo and video library)—Is this an inclusive representation of your service and community?
- ★ Ensure that your inclusive messaging is around the office and enforced internally to ensure all staff understand the company position and how to best represent the company's product/service
- ★ Research and be able to provide an inclusive and diverse suggested speakers list
- ★ Research and be able to provide information on inclusive engagement opportunities



# Supplier Diversity

The Institute for Supply Management defines Supplier Diversity as a procurement practice that requires the purposeful inclusion of diverse suppliers in bid opportunities to increase their representation in sourced spend. **Building a culture that supports supplier diversity is action-oriented, requiring rethinking processes, measuring potential to include diverse suppliers, quantifying their contributions, and determining the economic impact on communities.**

## Supplier Diversity Best Practices in the Hospitality Industry ...

### Develop a policy

The policy should represent intentionality to include diverse members of the community and ensure that meaningful opportunities exist for their participation in the world of business events

### Develop relationships with community partners

Includes, but not limited to, various chambers of commerce, local municipalities commerce department, and professional and affinity organizations (such as AARP, VFW)

### Develop relationships with and/or research diverse vendors

Meet the vendors and suppliers in your community via hosting an event or attending community-based events

### Prepare a database that easily identifies diverse vendors/service resources

This ensures you are prepared to quickly respond to a specified customer request and can be done in the simplest form, e.g., an Excel document or via your organization's CRM or contract management system—**Ensure the database is maintained, current, and accessible to the team.**



# Helpful Resources

## Hospitality Industry Resources:

[Tourism Diversity Matters](#)

[Destinations International Resources](#)

[PCMA Resources](#)

[MPI Resources](#)

## DMO Resources:

[Visit Raleigh](#)

[PHL Diversity](#)

[Visit Philly](#)

[Choose Chicago](#)

[Destination DC](#)

[Visit Richmond](#)

[Visit Indy](#)

## Supplier Diversity Resources:

**Pennsylvania Convention Center**

[Doing Business](#)

[Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination](#)

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[Houston First](#)

## Venue/Hotel Resources:

[Hyatt Resources](#)

## General Resources:

[McKinsey & Company](#)

[SHRM Resources](#)