

# Demystifying DEI: What exactly is DEI?

Learn about legal DEI practices and how to apply  
them to your community

*Tuesday, May 6, 2025 | 12:00-1:15 p.m.*

# Today's Panelists:

- ❖ Angela Clark, Chief of Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
  - ❖ Faustina Cuevas, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer and Senior Advisor to the mayor in Lynn
  - ❖ Pamela Young, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Amherst
  - ❖ Bird Guess, CEO of the Racial Equity Group and founder of the Center for Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity
  - ❖ Moderator: Jillian Harvey, MMA Chief Equity Officer
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# What is an Executive Order?

An executive order is a written directive, signed by the president, that orders the government to take specific actions to ensure “the laws be faithfully executed.” This means an order can tell a certain department to institute a new policy or rule, *but* executive orders *cannot* override federal laws and statutes.

There is a process for laws to get passed- Congress passes statutes, then the president signs them. If the president doesn’t sign, and vetoes them instead, then Congress can override the veto for the bill to become law.

Congress has control over laws and statutes related to spending, taxation, war powers and treating making- An Executive Order cannot preempt this process. A President cannot write a new statute with an executive order, *but the order can* tell departments and agencies how to implement certain laws.

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Diversity, equity and inclusion are interconnected concepts and values that show up in our daily lives, and should also be defined and incorporated into municipal policies and practices.

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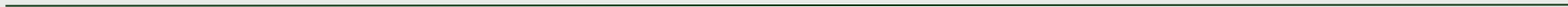
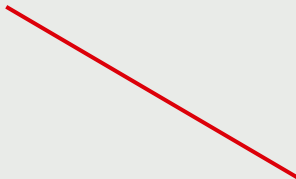
# Defining DEI

Diversity

Equity

Inclusion

Belonging



# Defining DEI

## Diversity

**Diversity** is variety and representation.

**Diversity** can be measured through numbers and is usually tracked by race, gender, sexual identity, age, ability level, cognitive learning differences, education, economic background, etc. **Diversity** looks at the full range of human and/or organizational differences and similarities across social identity categories.

## Equity

**Equity** is understanding that because of marginalization different people have differing needs. **Equity** requires changing structures of power and privilege so disparities of historically underrepresented groups are eliminated and therefore outcomes cannot be predicted by that grouping. **Equity** requires understanding the structures and systems that are currently in place, or not in place that prevent certain voices and people from being a part of the decision making systems that govern all our lives.

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# Defining DEI

## Belonging

**Belonging** is creating a space for differing cultures and beliefs to be represented and heard. **Belonging** is the ongoing culture created to have all people feel welcome across difference. **Belonging** is manifested in the relationships, in conversations, physical space and written word.

## Inclusion

**Inclusion** is centering marginalized groups, creating an environment in which any individual or group is and feels welcomed, respected, supported valued and fully able to participate as their authentic self. **Inclusion** cannot happen without belonging.

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# History of DEI Roles

Corporate → Higher Education → Municipality

The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) is a leadership position dedicated to diversity initiatives and climate transformation. Currently these roles exist with varying titles: Chief of Diversity & Inclusion, or Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director, or Organizational Equity and Belonging...and many more.

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# History of DEI Roles

- Following the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act employers were advised to establish programs to “manage” racial diversity effectively in the workplace, and as legal cases of racial and gender bias persisted, organizations turned their focus to redefine affirmative action initiatives as the management of diversity in efforts of increasing job satisfaction (Grim, Sanchez-Parkinson, Ting, & Chavous, 2019; Kellough & Naff, 2004).
  - The rise of these roles has most recently grounded its roots in the field of higher education. 72% of CDO positions were newly created between the years 2008 and 2013 across at least 60 colleges and universities as a position of leadership who is devoted to diversity planning and implementation (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).
  - The scholarship on academia reveals that the development of CDOs on college and university campuses occurred simultaneous to the advancement of chief diversity officers in the corporate sector (Gose, 2006; Harvey, 2014; Leon, 2010 & 2014; Williams & Wade Golden, 2013).
  - The level of understanding of the role of the CDO by the institutional leaders will determine the level of impact a CDO may have on a college campus. Williams and Wade-Golden, (2013) categorizes the CDO’s ability to influence the organization into three domains, they are *Strategic Span*, *Span of Control*, and *Span of Support*.
  - Though diversity offices were established on college campuses to react to egregious incidents, the position was not equipped with critical institutional support needed for successful diversity initiatives. The Parker (2015) multisite case study reveals that rank, authority and other sources of power must accompany the position of CDO in addition to providing efficient institutional support in order for the institution to experience successful results.
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# Why is DEI important in the municipal sphere?

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Everyone plays a role in DEI. Each person's role depends on their own perspectives and awareness, as well as the perspectives of those leading DEI efforts. At its best, DEI is a part of everything we do, every environment we create, every transaction and interaction that we have. It is a lens through which we see the world, make choices, and build relationships. DEI must be an integral part of how we do our day-to-day work.

DEI Guide, 2022  
MA Municipal DEI Coalition

## Tips for making DEI shared work in your municipality

There are many ways to establish DEI work as a collective responsibility in your organization. Steps to take may include:

**Create space for dialogue.** Hold space within the organization to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion as a set of shared values, and to discuss why these values matter.

**Establish top-down leadership.** Ensure DEI values come from the top of the organization, and that they are reflected in the words and actions of municipal leaders and department heads.

**Create departmental roles.** Identify a DEI leader within each department, and unite these people through an internal DEI committee. Note: this person doesn't have to be a director.

**Update hiring practices.** Incorporate DEI practices into hiring practices for every department. This could include using interview questions such as "What do you know about DEI?" and "What have you done to advance DEI where you worked before?"

**Evaluate.** Use DEI-related metrics in staff evaluations, and to determine promotions and raises.

**Practice patience.** Understand that while institutional culture change is urgent, it is also slow and persistent work. Recognize that many people within the organization will be slow to change.

**Meet people where they are.** Prepare for the fact that people will be at different places in their journeys. Plan for how you will meet people where they are while ensuring that they engage with this work.

**Treat DEI work as cultural work.** Remember that DEI work means a change in behavior as well as policy.

Thank You!

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