

Glossary: Words Matter

Organizations use several acronyms to describe their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts today. While this is a non-exhaustive list, here are the most frequently used acronyms and terms:

- **DEI:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- **DEIB:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.
- **JEDI:** Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- **DEIBJ:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice.
- **DIB:** Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging.
- **D&I:** Diversity and Inclusion.

Now, here's how we define and understand these terms:

Diversity: Diversity includes all the ways in which individuals and groups of individuals differ. The term simply describes the presence of individuals from various identities, backgrounds, perspectives, and values.

Inclusion: Inclusion enables people with different social identities to lead and succeed in different, self-determined, and authentic ways. It involves creating environments where any individual or group is welcomed, respected, and supported, where people can participate in a way that results in shared leadership.

Belonging: An individual's sense of acceptance and comfort within a particular space as a valued member of that organization or community. Includes trust in others within the organization or community. It generates feelings of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a particular group or place.


Connectedness: A feeling of belonging to or affinity with co-workers and colleagues within an organization and experiencing a sense of support and inclusion among colleagues, managers, and organizational leaders. It may include feeling connected to one's immediate team and/or to the mission and vision of the organization. However, these connections may not exist together (e.g., one may be connected to their team but not the organization's mission and vice-versa).

Equity: Equity is the fair and just treatment of all people, demonstrated through the acknowledgment that systemically, individuals have vastly different access to opportunity and thus need additional resources to be successful. It also includes the intentional design and execution of fair policies, processes, trainings, systems, and structures.



Whiteness at Work

Justice: Justice is an active process of understanding and dismantling existing systems of oppression, power, and domination by repeatedly challenging the status quo through social movements, coalition building, mutual aid, and allyship. The pursuit of justice is a commitment to cultivating an equitable and liberatory future and society. In organizational contexts, we may start with diversity but the ultimate goal is justice and liberation.



Liberation: Liberation is a serious commitment to imagining, building, and creating new systems that center equity, reciprocity, solidarity, sovereignty, self determination, agency, and our collective humanity. Liberation goes beyond dismantling existing systems of oppression and power to cultivating new ways of living and being that are in our best interests as individual humans and a collective. It's important to remember that liberation is not a destination, it is an orientation and journey to building a just and equitable society.

Racial equity: Racial equity is when race does not determine or predict the distribution of resources, opportunities, and burdens. Race equity must be addressed at the root causes and not just its manifestations. In an organization, it is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism and racial bias by changing systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes so that power and resources are redistributed and shared equitably.

White supremacy: White supremacy is a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. -Frances Lee Ansley

White dominant culture and norms: The National Museum of African American History and Culture describes “how white people and their practices, beliefs, and culture have been normalized over time and are now considered standard in the United States. As a result, all Americans have all adopted various aspects of white culture, including People of Color.” This definition is predicated on an understanding of whiteness and white racial identity as the way white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. White dominant culture is broadly enacted across society and within the context of social entities such as organizations.

