



## APBA Diversity & Inclusion Committee

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# Guidance on creating values committed to equity and social justice for professional organizations



### Description

A step-by-step document designed to steer organizations towards formulating and implementing a values statement that champions equity and social justice. This checklist-style guide walks organizations through the process of understanding the crucial role of equity, designing a values statement that embodies these principles, and effectively incorporating these values into daily operations. The document offers practical steps to initiate specific equity-enhancing strategies and provides tools for ongoing evaluation and refinement of the efforts in response to evolving organizational goals. This resource is a fundamental blueprint for organizations intending to make meaningful and enduring strides toward fostering an inclusive and socially just environment.

### A Step-by-Step Guide

#### 1. Define Current and Future Commitment

- a. Begin by clearly identifying and articulating your organization's current commitment to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice. Assess the organization's policies and procedures through an equity and social justice lens to determine what changes may be needed related to diversity and inclusion (D&I) activities, initiatives, or policies. Review and reflect on existing policies, practices, and

initiatives - do they promote these values? Are there areas for improvement or gaps that need to be addressed? Utilize self-assessment tools or independent audits to help objectively evaluate your organization's current standing.

b. Next, envision your organization's future commitment to these principles. What does embeddedness of equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice look like in your organization? Set specific, ambitious, yet attainable goals to increase embeddedness across all aspects of your organization, including hiring practices, training programs, leadership representation, and service delivery.

c. During this exploratory phase, your organization might identify gaps in knowledge or expertise regarding equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice. This is a crucial realization. It is essential to recognize and accept that seeking professional guidance can enhance your understanding and capacity to implement meaningful changes. Consider reaching out to professionals, consultants, and organizations specializing in these areas. Their experience and expertise can be invaluable in helping your organization navigate complexities and implement effective and impactful strategies.

## **2. Engage and understand your community**

a. Start with a “temperature read” to gauge the current climate within your organization in relation to the communities you serve. This could be through confidential surveys, interviews, and open forums where individuals can freely express their thoughts and experiences. Remember, this is not just about positive feedback; understanding areas of concern or dissatisfaction is equally, if not more, valuable.

b. Be sure to involve members service recipients, staff, and leadership, including board members, of your organization in the development process to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences are represented. Use a variety of methods to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences are represented, such as group discussions, focus groups, meetings at your conventions/conferences, or virtual engagement platforms.

c. Encourage collaboration and partnership with other organizations, institutions, and communities to share resources, knowledge, and best practices in promoting diversity and inclusion.

d. During your engagement process, it is vital to identify and acknowledge the voices within your community that have historically been marginalized or silenced. These may include people from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, among others. Centering these voices involves actively seeking their input and ensuring they have a safe and empowering space to express their experiences, concerns, needs, and aspirations. Strategies may include creating dedicated forums or focus groups for these communities, providing support for individuals to speak in larger forums, and partnering with community advocates or

organizations who can effectively represent these perspectives. Remember, centering marginalized voices is not about tokenism, but about genuinely acknowledging, valuing, and integrating their experiences and insights into your organization's commitment to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice.

### **3. Determine the desired outcomes for your organization's equity and social justice values statement**

- a. Start by thoroughly analyzing the data collected from the community engagement process. This includes understanding the unique needs, perspectives, and shared experiences shared, especially from those voices that have been historically marginalized. Identifying key themes and recurring issues will guide the next steps.
- b. Based on the analysis clearly outline the purpose and goals for including equity and social justice as an organizational value. These goals should align with your organization's broader vision, and values while addressing the unique needs and barriers identified within your community. Be clear on how the embeddedness of your equity and social justice value will effect change and overcome identified barriers. How will this result in change in the community and address barriers?
- c. Articulate the specific initiatives and strategies your organization will adopt to promote diversity and inclusion. This may range from training programs that enhance cultural competence and promote cultural humility, creating mentorship opportunities, ensuring events are accessible to all, to diversifying hiring practices. The outlined actions should be practical, impactful, and responsive to the needs identified in your analysis.
- d. Establish clear, attainable, and time-bound objectives for diversity and inclusion efforts to track progress and hold your organization accountable. Identify what resources will be needed to achieve your organization's goals, and secure financial resources, if needed.

### **4. Communicate commitment to equity**

- a. The final step involves refining your comprehensive values statement that communicates the organization's commitment to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice to your partners, contributors, and community.
- b. Express the organization's commitment to reducing disparities and addressing systemic barriers within the profession and the organization. What are the action steps that you plan to carry out?
- c. If feasible, consider assigning a specific committee, task force, or individual with the responsibility of implementing, refining, and overseeing your initiatives. This emphasizes your organization's accountability and commitment to embedding your

equity and social justice values. This step can be adapted based on your organization's structure and resources.

d. Ensure that committee members are committed to their own ongoing reflection of personal biases, education regarding best practices in equity and social justice initiatives, sensitive use of related terminology, and research on marginalized communities.

### **Note: Moving Forward - Sustaining the Momentum:**

As your organization continues its journey towards increased inclusivity, accessibility, equity, and social justice, it is vital to sustain the momentum and remain adaptable to your community's evolving needs. This process is not a one-time initiative, but a continuous commitment to learning, growth, and improvement. Regular reviews and updates to your commitment and values statement are a key part of ensuring its ongoing relevance and alignment with your evolving objectives. Moreover, it is critical to establish methods to measure and track the progress of your efforts. Accountability is not merely an internal matter but extends to providing regular and transparent updates to your community. Sharing milestones, challenges, and successes can help to build trust and keep your community engaged in implementing your values. Finally, seeking regular feedback from your community and other stakeholders provides essential perspectives that can inform ongoing improvements. It is a valuable part of the process to know what is working and what may need to be adapted. Remember, the journey towards becoming a more equitable and inclusive organization is ongoing, requiring consistent effort, a willingness to learn, and a genuine commitment to promoting social justice.